

the chronicle

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UP A TREAT AT
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Olympic torch is ready to light up the region



From left, director and chief executive Andrew Lovett, with Audrey Armet, of Wolverhampton, and Graham Wheatcroft, at Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

Towns and cities across the Black Country are celebrating as the full Olympic Torch route has been unveiled, bringing the iconic flame to the region as part of a national relay ahead of the London 2012 games.

Attractions including canals at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley will be visited – and the tour will work its way through the Midlands before the relay culminates with a special evening of celebrations during an overnight stay in Birmingham city centre.

The torch will be in Staffordshire on May 30 and then again on June 30 before heading through the Black Country region. It will first pass through Bloxwich, Leamore, Birchills and Walsall.

It will then be taken through Wil-

lenhall before heading to Wolverhampton and then on to Dudley via the Black Country Living Museum prior to heading to Oldbury, West Bromwich and Smethwick.

At the Black Country Living Museum, the torch bearer will take the flame on a trip along the canal in the Stour boat, as well as ride on the historic tram line through the popular attraction.

Museum chief executive Andrew Lovett said: "I feel so proud to welcome the Olympic Torch to the Black Country Living Museum, on behalf of the region."

Dudley Council leader Les Jones added: "I'm absolutely delighted. The Olympics is a major event that you don't normally get to see, so for people to be able to get so close to a part of it

is marvellous."

Wyre Forest District Council chairman Councillor Steve Clee said he was "delighted".

"It will put Wyre Forest on the map – we are only the second council in Worcestershire to be visited so it is a big deal for us," he said.

The relay will pass through Willenhall before heading to Wolverhampton where a number of celebration events will be staged.

Councillor Elias Mattu, Wolverhampton City Council's Cabinet Member for Leisure and Communities, said: "Over the years Wolverhampton has produced many sportsmen and women who have represented the city on the national and international stage, and it is fitting tribute to them."

Council plans to cut £12.8m from budget

Dudley Council plans to cut £12.8m from its budget over the next two years.

Outline plans have been released as part of a public consultation, including the introduction of new roadside parking charges in Dudley and Stourbridge, where shoppers can currently park for free for up to two hours.

The council also plans to increase bereavement service costs. The announcement follows the news that more than 500 people have expressed an interest in taking redundancy at Dudley Council next year.

The launch of the second year of a redundancy programme which will see around 200 positions go by April 2013. Following an announcement in January, the local authority has already shed more than 400 jobs this year as part of a bid to save £22 million.

The move is part of wider plans to axe 800 jobs over the next three years. Council bosses have revealed they have already received a inquiries from workers thinking about leaving in the second year of the redundancy programme in 2012/2013 including some from workers who are not eligible to leave as the council cannot get rid of their position.

Deputy leader of the council, councillor Tim Wright, said: "We are going through the process of compiling the information on expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy but in excess of 500 expressions have been received."

"This includes around 100 requests from employees currently in excluded posts who would like to be considered should the situation change".

As part of the council's redundancy scheme 400 jobs were earmarked to go in year one, this year, with 200 for each of the following financial years. Last year the number of compulsory redundancies made at the council came in at 56 and bosses say that will remain a last resort in any future staff savings over the coming year.

Mother, 74, is injured and suspect charged with murder of her son

MAN, 47, FOUND KILLED AT HOME

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A murder investigation has been started following the death of a 47-year-old man at his home in Dudley.

Kevin Jones was pronounced dead at the scene in Woodside and his 74-year-old mother Jean Jones taken to hospital with leg injuries after the incident. A man has appeared in court charged with murder.

It was not clear how Mr Jones was killed. Police patrols have been stepped up in the streets surrounding the house to provide reassurance to local families. William Spence, aged 38, of Fullwood Crescent, Dudley, is accused of murdering Mr Jones and assaulting his mother at the Buxton Road house at around 10.10pm on Saturday. He appeared at Dudley Magistrates Court where he was remanded in custody to appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Cordoned

Neighbours spoke of their shock over the tragedy as the house, just yards from The New Testament Church of God, which was cordoned off for forensic investigations.

One resident, who did not wish to be named, said: "It is a real shock that something like this has happened around here. Usually it is such a quiet place."

"At first I thought it might have been something like kids messing about with fireworks, it being the bonfire weekend. But obviously it has turned out to be something far more serious."

A family friend, who did not wish to be named, said: "Jean is not very well and staying with friends. Everyone is distraught."

Neighbours say Mrs Jones returned home briefly but is believed to be staying with friends.

Ban Chinese lanterns call as car is set on fire

A car was destroyed in a blaze which started when a Chinese lantern landed on its bonnet. The Vauxhall Corsa was parked outside the home of owners Jackie Tetley and David Hickenbottom in Swanfield Road, Wordsley, when the stray lantern landed on it, causing a fire which spread to the inside of the car.

The couple described how they were alerted to the blaze by a neighbour and when they looked outside saw flames 2ft tall. It was the first of two fires, suspected to have been caused by Chinese lanterns, attended by firefighters in the Dudley borough last night.

The other, on the Gibbons Road Industrial Estate in Brierley Hill, damaged a tree. The owners of the car are now calling for the items to be banned.

A lantern landed on their car, causing a fire which spread through a vent, melting the dashboard. The couple are now calling for the lanterns, which consist of a metal frame with a candle inside, to be banned.

Frightening

"It's really frightening to think what could happen – there was a three-quarter-full tank of petrol there; what if we hadn't noticed the fire and it spread there?" said mother-of-one Miss Tetley.

"They are really dangerous, and something should be done. My car is probably written off so I will be out of pocket just because someone wanted to see a pretty flame go up in the sky."

Mr Hickenbottom, aged 47, said they had been watching TV when a neighbour knocked on their door to alert them on Sunday.

"I looked out the window and just saw flames, around two foot tall," he added.

"I couldn't believe it. I got the hose and fought it the best I could while Jackie called the police and fire brigade. It's shocking what damage they can cause."



Jackie Tetley, from Wordsley, and her damaged Vauxhall Corsa

Firefighters based in Brierley Hill were called to the blaze at 8.30pm – and less than four hours later, a crew from the same station were called to the other fire suspected to have been caused by a stray lantern. Watch commander Dave Foley said the second fire had taken hold of a conifer tree at 11.55pm on the Gibbons Road Industrial Estate. "The estate is locked at night, with CCTV monitoring and no source of ignition that we could find near the tree," he said.

"We also found what looked like a metal frame from one of these kind of lanterns nearby. We can't prove that's what caused the fire but that's what we suspect. In my personal opinion, they are very dangerous things indeed."

Police asked to drop attack probe

A man stabbed several times in an attack at a Halesowen graveyard has asked police to drop their investigation.

The 28-year-old was found in a house nearby in Stourbridge Road, Halesowen, on Saturday morning with life-threatening injuries, but is now stable.

Halesowen Cemetery and the grounds of St John the Baptist Church were cordoned off for most of Saturday for forensic tests.

West Midlands Police spokeswoman Pav Shergill confirmed the case would not continue at the request of the victim.

"This was an isolated incident and we do not want locals to be alarmed," she said. "The local neighbourhood team have increased patrols in the area and they are on hand to speak to anyone with any concerns."

She refused to comment further.

Extra help for veterans

Dudley Council has launched a new charter to offer extra help to military veterans to re-adjust to civilian life.

Former servicemen and women will benefit from services, including housing priority and leisure centre discounts. It follows a commitment by Dudley Council to work with other organisations to ensure veterans are getting the support they need. It includes ensuring people leaving forces accommodation are a council housing priority and also helping with council tax and housing benefit claims.

The charter is supported by the local Royal British Legion and Job Centre Plus, Dudley Citizens Advice Bureaux, Dudley Council for Voluntary Services and Dudley Chamber of Commerce.

Rethink – page 3

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Man claimed to be his son

A driver who pretended to be his son when stopped by police – despite there being a 30 year age gap – has been banned from driving.

Godwin Chabata, aged 52, has never passed his test but drove his son's car to collect his wife on September 18, Dudley Magistrates Court heard. He was involved in a crash with another car in Highbridge Road, Netherton but gave his 22-year-old son's name to officers as he was the registered owner.

Police worked out he was lying, said Mr Mark Cooper, prosecuting, and arrested him. Mr Robert Skinner, defending, said Chabata was "shocked" after the crash.

Chabata, of Lodge Crescent, Dudley, admitted obstructing a police constable, driving without a licence, and using a vehicle without insurance. He was banned for six months, and ordered to pay a £270 in fines, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

Victim is named

A man killed when his car crashed into a tree has been named as Adam Johnson. The 22-year-old from Stourbridge was pronounced dead at the scene in Balmoral Road, Wordsley, shortly before midnight on Friday.

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Link road work may start within weeks

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A new link road between the two major tourist attractions in Dudley is set to be one of the first projects built as part of a £10 million transformation.

The plans to link Dudley Zoo and the Black Country Living Museum have been in the pipeline for years but were held back by nearby roadworks at the Burnt Tree junction and the new Tesco. Since £4.5m European funding was agreed, plans are being drawn up to start work on the link road in Dudley within weeks.

Dudley regeneration chief councillor Angus Adams, said they were keen to move the diggers in "as soon as possible".

Detailed plans are being drawn up for the road, which will run from near the Trading Post premises in Castle Hill to the back of the museum in nearby Tipton Road.

The road will also provide access to the Dudley Canal Trust at the back of the museum. The scheme includes a large car park which would be shared by the attractions. Council chiefs are now planning a programme of road closures for the area while the work is carried out.

Demolished

Councillor Adams said: "We want to get going as soon as we can."

"Everything is in place now – the old Royal Brierley Crystal building next to the museum has been demolished, so it is all set up for work to begin."

The scheme, which forms part of a wider project across 200 hectares of land around Castle Hill, eventually hopes to pave the way for dozens of new businesses and turn the district into a tourism and leisure hub.

The foundation of this hub will be created with the building of a shared arrival point and car park for visitors to the three attractions, leading off Tipton Road, and the £6m Sandwell archive building.

Plots for other leisure and tourism attractions will be created along the road.

Horses killed by arson attack on stables



These two young horses escaped the stables blaze but still suffered injuries

Three horses were killed and two seriously injured in an arson attack on a stables in the Black Country.

Police and fire officers were investigating after detection equipment showed petrol was used to set the shelter ablaze.

Two foals, aged six months and eight months, and a 14-month-old horse were trapped inside and killed in the fire, while two other horses managed to escape, possibly by kicking down the stable doors. One was left blind while the other suffered severe smoke inhalation, and both were put on a 24-hour emergency watch by a vet.

The wreckage of the stables, in a field off Huntsmill Drive, Pensnett, Dudley, was discovered Sunday morning by its devastated owners, who had driven there to feed the animals.

Owner June Thornton, aged 63, who lives nearby in Smithy Lane with her husband Paul, 66, said: "I'm heartbroken."

Witnesses should call police on 0345 113 5000.



The scene of the fire which killed three young horses in Pensnett, Dudley

Hotline to blow the whistle

Five reports have been made to a new hotline and website set up by Dudley Council to catch workers suspected of stealing or misusing resources, or outside groups that falsely obtain contracts or grants.

The authority set up the new scheme last month so people and workers can blow the whistle on staff or groups they believe are wrongly using the authority's cash and equipment.

Now bosses have revealed the new scheme has already attracted a response. Councillor David Blood, said: "It's one month since the launch of Dudley Council's fraud hotline and website and to date we have received five reports."

"The council remains committed to making sure council money is used for the purposes for which it is intended, meeting the needs of local people."

He added: "All reported incidents will be investigated thoroughly."

Under the new scheme, residents and council staff are able to report any suspicion of fraud which will then be investigated by a specialist team.

This includes fraudulent use of money, such as people getting cash they are not entitled to, including payments for contracts, supplies or grants.

To report suspected fraud visit www.dudley.gov.uk/fraud or call the dedicated hotline on 01384 814242.

People will be asked to leave a recorded message. Details are held in strict confidence.

Woodwork show

An exhibition of work by members of the Woodworkers' Guild, including carving and scrollwork, has opened in Halesowen. The items are on show at Halesowen Library, in the Cornbow Centre, and will remain there until the end of the month. The Guild meets every other Wednesday at the Quinborne Centre in Ridgacre Road, Quinton, between 7pm and 9.30pm. Call 0121 427 6375.

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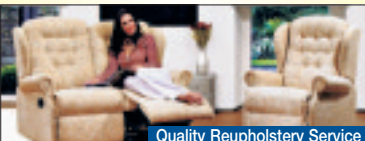
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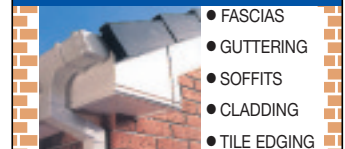
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Rethink on festival as support falters

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Ticket sales for Dudley's annual Festival of Remembrance have plummeted in recent years – sparking emergency meetings to address the issue.

While five years ago the event at Dudley Concert Hall drew audiences of more than 600, this year's concert on November 10 seems unlikely to reach 400. Organisers have revealed plans to revamp the festival, including moves to increase its appeal to a younger audience.

Ian Rawlings, from the Kingswinford-based Gentlemen Songsters Male Voice Choir, who host the concert every year, said he would be looking into joining forces with the Royal British Legion and other ex-Servicemen's clubs.

Ageing

"The problem is, we have an ageing audience and every time one veteran dies you might lose four or five people who might have joined them at the concert," he said.

"It just doesn't seem to appeal to a modern audience so we will have to look closely at our marketing strategy and how we stage the event – and we will have to do that as soon as this one is over."

The traditional poppy-drop, carried out by concert hall staff during the minute silence, will be slightly different this year than in previous years as council health and safety watchdogs raised concerns. In previous years, staff had to clamber across the roof and up a ladder to reach the drop spot.

But Mr Rawlings said he was now examining other options such as having a netting system to release the poppies.

Tickets are £8, available from Dudley box office on 01384 812812 or the choir on 01384 838863.



Gentleman Songsters John Smith, Ian Rawlings and Paul Whitehead with, left, president of Dudley RAF Association John Deane and, right, secretary of Worcester and Forrester's Gordon Willetts

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Hospital governor numbers slashed

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The number of public-elected governors at a Black Country hospital trust is being slashed, bosses have announced. The move means there will be eight fewer representatives who are voted for by patients at Dudley borough's three hospitals.

But the number of staff-elected governors has increased. The overall number of governors, which also includes staff and appointed members, will be reduced from 39 to 25. Hospital bosses say it will make the council of governors more efficient and it will also save money by reducing administration costs.

The proposals for the council of governors, which oversees work at the hospital trust and represents the interests of patients, have been approved by independent foundation trust watchdog, Monitor.

The number of public-elected governors for the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust will be reduced by eight to 13 which includes two each for Brierley Hill, Central Dudley, North Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen. While one governor will represent patients in each of three wards, Rowley Regis and Tipton, South Staffordshire and Wyre Forest and the West Midlands.

Efficiently

There will also be a reduction in representatives appointed from associated organisations but the number of staff-elected governors will rise from six to eight.

Governor Steve Walther said: "Other foundation trusts have smaller councils of governors and it works better for them. It makes them more manageable and means they run more efficiently. The bigger organisations get the more unruly they can be."

"Having a smaller council will make the decision making process more efficient and help us to better represent the interests of the patients in the borough. There are also reductions in administration cost as well as a result of the savings."

The hospital trust was granted Foundation Trust status in 2008, giving it greater control over its finances.

Details can be viewed at www.dudleygroup.nhs.uk

Abbey's in the swim for charity



Abbey Tromans, aged nine, who did a sponsored swim in Dudley

Swimmer Abbey Tromans made a splash raising money for this year's Children In Need appeal.

The nine-year-old from Holly Hall, Dudley, swam 100 lengths at Dudley Leisure Centre in aid of the cause.

It took the Stourbridge Swimming Club member an hour and 10 minutes to complete the fundraising challenge.

Abbey, a pupil at Woodside Primary School, Dudley, who was cheered on by her family and friends, is hoping to raise £100.

Her mother Melanie Bowater

said Abbey had enjoyed her swim. "She does something every year for Children In Need."

"She is a very keen swimmer and decided she wanted to swim 100 lengths. She's a member of Stourbridge Swimming Club and takes part in swimming galas."

"She took it upon herself to organise the sponsored swim and fill in the forms. She enjoyed it but she was very tired afterwards."

The money raised by Abbey will be given to the appeal which aims to generate funds to help disadvantaged children.

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Residents' anger on sites plan

Impassioned pleas were made to throw out proposals for a gipsy site in a "deprived and forgotten" area of Kidderminster where residents have been working hard to improve their surroundings.

Members of the Broadwaters Residents Action Group (Brag) and other local people spoke out at a public consultation meeting called by Wyre Forest District Council about plans for a gipsy and traveller site with 10 pitches at the site of the former Sion Hill School. Up to 170 people attended the meeting.

Sarah Rook, chairman of Brag, said: "We are in a ward in one of the 10 per

cent most deprived areas - with high crime and low attainment. We believe we are the forgotten estate and are fighting hard to change this.

"We would like the site to be the new Wyre Forest special school or a training centre - education is what it should be used for."

Resident John Bennett, of Upton Road, said he knew of someone living near the former school whose home had dropped in value from £140,000 to £80,000 as a result of the gipsy site plan. "You will be devaluing people's lives by 40 per cent - it's an absolute disgrace," he said.

Brag member Bev Royal told the

meeting, held at Wolverley Memorial Hall, there was no room at local schools or doctors' practices to cope with travellers.

Wyre Forest District Councillor for Broadwaters, Howard Martin, said: "If the site at Sion Hill isn't developed suitably for the local community the area will go back into decline."

Wyre Forest Council says it needs to create a total of 43 extra pitches by 2022, as well as a site for travelling showpeople. The council is asking for views on sites for gipsy pitches including Manor Farm, St John's Road, the Gables Yard, Saiwen and land adjacent Nunn's Corner, all in Stourport.

MP in bid to launch debate

A Black Country MP has led a backbench debate in Parliament on NHS care of the elderly.

Margot James, MP for Stourbridge called the debate after the Care Quality Commission's recent report, based on unannounced visits to hospitals throughout England, revealed concerns in standards of care for elderly patients. Some 20 per cent of hospitals were identified as failing to meet their legal requirements on care.

During the debate Ms James called for nurses to spend more time on the ward during their training. She also asked Paul Burstow, the Minister for Care Services, to meet with the Nursing and Midwifery Council to discuss how best to take this idea forward.

Mr Burstow replied that he would discuss the matter with the minister responsible for nursing, Anne Milton. Ms James said afterwards: "For a long time research has confirmed the failings in our care of older people without effective action being taken to remedy it or to reduce the problem."

Ced pitches in to restore caravan

Work is nearly complete on a replica Gipsy caravan that was just moments away from being destroyed in a fire at a Midland museum.

Volunteer Ced Lewis, aged 82, had spent about 400 hours on the project over three years at the County Museum in Hartlebury Castle, near Kidderminster.

The two-thirds size wooden caravan, called Bita Engwini - Romani for "the little princess" - was dragged to safety by firefighters as a blaze tore through a workshop earlier this month.

Replaced

Some of the intricate paintwork was damaged and two inside doors had to be replaced but Mr Lewis, of Penn, Wolverhampton, said it could have been "so much worse". He added: "The flames were literally yards away - a few more moments and the caravan would have been a pile of ash. I was upset the paintwork was spoiled but I am so grateful to the fire crews that saved it."

Mr Lewis, a retired engineer, hopes to put the caravan on display to visitors early next year.



Ced Lewis with Bita Rawni, a Gipsy caravan he has been building for nearly three years which was nearly destroyed in a recent fire at Hartlebury Castle

Stourbridge Crematorium

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Sunday 4 December 2011, 11am and 3pm

This service is particularly appropriate where the funeral of a relative or friend has taken place at the crematorium, however, everyone is welcome.

Due to high demand, admission is by ticket only. Tickets are available by calling 01384 813985 or visiting the crematorium on 16 November after 10.30am.

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£900,000 invested to create new jobs

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A family-run steel processing firm has invested almost £1million to boost production and create new jobs at its factory in Brierley Hill. Cooper & Jackson has recently completed £900,000 works to install new steel cutting machinery.

Bosses from the Pedmore Road Industrial Estate firm, which has been running for 32 years, said two new members of staff had already been taken on to operate the new machinery.

And more are expected to be employed to work on the new line in the future.

Bosses bought the machinery from steel supplier Outokumpu which recently closed its Sheffield plant where the line was previously housed.

It is the only machinery from the Outokumpu site to remain in the UK as the remaining devices were purchased by firms overseas, including India.

Commercial manager John Cooper said the machinery had been totally reconditioned and updated before being installed at the factory in Brierley Hill.

Improvement

It has also been adapted to suit the requirements of the firm with 90 per cent of the improvement and installation work carried out by other firms in the Black Country.

Mr Cooper said: "This has not only been a good thing for us but other businesses across the Black Country which have also benefited from the work to put the machine in place."

"In terms of our business it will help to boost production. In the current climate this is a very positive step to take and we are delighted the machine is now in place."

"With all of the work which has been carried out it really does look like a completely new piece of equipment and this is a testament to those who have worked on the machine."

"Two members of staff have already been employed to work on the new line and we do have plans to take on more staff in the future."

The firm celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2009 and employs 30 people. It was started by John's father Chris and his business partner Ken Jackson.

Girls cook up a storm



Shannon Ward and Olivia Parry with manager Matthew Turner at the Harvester in Halesowen where the girls were chefs for the day

Two teenagers served up a treat when they were chefs for the day at a Halesowen restaurant.

Steve Ford, from Wishing Well, said the girls had enjoyed their time in the kitchen. "They were shown around the kitchen by the chefs. They were told about the different equipment and what it's used for. Then they helped to prepare a lamb meal."

"They really enjoyed themselves. They said they wanted to become chefs before and their visit has confirmed this. It was nice to be able to organise it for them," he said.

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Members launch a church sponsor plan

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A business plan is being drawn up to help secure the future of a landmark Dudley church which closed eight years ago. The St John's Church Preservation Group wants to launch a sponsorship scheme to restore the building in Kates Hill.

Members are hoping that pledges of funding from business, community groups and individuals will help kick-start the project. It is expected to cost between £150,000 and £200,000 to get it reopened. Then work has to be carried out on the Grade II-listed building to restore it.

The estimate for that has been put at £1 million. Campaigners are hoping people will come forward to sponsor the church through donating services or goods that could be used to get the building up and running again.

Chairwoman Deb Brownlee said: "We aim to create the first fully sponsored church building in the UK."

"A full sponsor package is being compiled including the creation of executive sponsor only area within the building."

Disturbance

"This way we can fund and restore St John's Church without any disturbance of historic fabric other than for essential redecoration, re-wiring and installation of amenities."

Meanwhile, the group is appealing for anyone interested in saving St John's Church to go online and complete a survey at the website.

Suggestions on uses of the building will be used to help determine its future.

They are also looking for individuals, sports clubs and other groups who may want to use the building for their regular activities.

The link can be found on www.oakhamresearch.com and www.savestjohnschurch.zoomshare.com and surveys need to be filled in by November 18.

Anyone interesting in getting involved in the sponsorship scheme can call 07871 195042.

The church is where bare-knuckle fighter William Perry, known as the Tipton Slasher, is buried. It opened in 1840 and was listed by English Heritage in 2009.

It was closed because of safety fears although recent surveys have shown the building is not in as bad a condition as first thought.

Group weighs in for charity



Slimming World leader Michaela Mucklow presents £300 to Mary Stevens Hospice's Janet Jones, with the weight-loss group at Lutley Community Centre in Halesowen

Slimmers from weight-loss groups in the Black Country have piled on the pounds with a charity ball raising cash for Mary Stevens Hospice.

A total of £300 was raised by members of Slimming World groups in Halesowen and Stourbridge at a Vegas-themed awards ball honouring winners in the Woman of the Year and Biggest Loser categories.

The money from the event, which featured raffles, silent auctions and a donation bucket, was presented to the Stourbridge-based charity yesterday.

Slimming World leader

Michaela Mucklow, who runs two groups, said the event, held at the Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill in September, had been such a success they were now planning to hold a similar awards ceremony every year.

"Everyone was in high spirits and giving generously," she said.

"We asked all the members which charity they would want the money to go to and Mary Stevens Hospice, being a local one, came out top. It was lovely handing out so many awards to people who have come along to group to turn their health around and lose weight."

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Work to start on college campus

Construction work on a new multi-million pound sixth form and higher education centre will get under way within weeks according to Dudley College principal Lowell Williams.

A work programme is being finalised for the development of the new base on the corner of Priory Road and Ednam Road in the heart of Dudley.

Preparatory work will have started before contractors are welcomed on site in around two weeks time.

The announcement comes as the college's vocational centre in Tower Street starts to take shape.

The metal frame for the building can be seen while the historic facade of

the former fire station, which is being redeveloped, has been retained.

Staff and students can follow the progress of the project via a web cam set up at the construction site.

Mr Williams said: "Work is going fantastically well. Now we can see it being built we can it will be a landmark building in Dudley."

Altered

The sixth form and higher education centre, called Dudley Sixth, will be built on land by Grade II listed Kudos House.

College bosses had originally wanted to demolish the building but

had to go back to the drawing board after it was awarded listed status. It will now be altered so that it can be used by workers at the college.

The sixth form, which will offer A-level courses, will have teaching rooms, science and language labs as well as a resource study centre and student social space.

Mr Williams said a start date is now imminent. He said: "We will start work very soon. Remedial work will start this week and the main contractors will be on site in a couple of weeks."

The two developments form part of a new £30million university-style campus for the college.

Car parks revamp has begun

Resurfacing work has begun at a Black Country car park - heralding the start of a major revamp of a town centre shopping complex. Work on the entry and exit ramps of Ryemarket car park in Stourbridge got underway recently.

Work is being carried out at the car park ahead of the demolition of the 458-space Bell Street multi-storey car park, which is due to take place in the new year. The work is part of the major £50 million project at the Crown Centre which will see a new Tesco superstore built.

The entrance and exit ramps are being resurfaced on Ryemarket multi-storey, which will be one of the alternative car parks motorists can use after Bell Street car park is closed.

Council bosses say the work is, where possible, being carried out during quiet shopping hours.

Councillor Patrick Harley, cabinet member for transportation, said: "These works will improve the Ryemarket multi-storey which is one of a number of alternative car parks."

Small wonders at nature reserve

Spring was in the air as youngsters helped volunteers at a Dudley nature reserve to plant snowdrop and bluebell bulbs ready to peep through the ground at the end of winter.

While they were there the children also collected twigs and leaves to create their own "woodland wonders" in a craft workshop at Bumble Hole Nature Reserve, Netherton.

Around 15 young people spent a day of their half-term holiday helping members of Bumble Hole Conservation Group to plant more than 500 bulbs.

"We will be planting a total of around 4,000 bulbs and some trees in the next few weeks - and it will look beautiful when the bulbs grow and provide a lovely carpet of snowdrops and bluebells," said Terry Evans, vice-chairman of the conservation group.

"We plough back the money raised from selling teas and coffees in the visitor centre into buying trees and bulbs."

The youngsters also collected items from around the nature reserve to create creatures like spiders and centipedes in a woodland craft session led by Sue Goodyear, secretary of the conservation group.



Sisters Mary-Ellen Upton, aged nine, left, and Charlotte Ann Upton, 11, pictured with the "woodland wonders" that they made during the craft workshop

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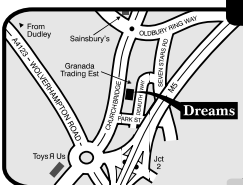
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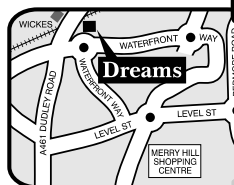
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Views are sought on library move

The public are being urged to have their say on plans which could see Netherton library moved from its historic home.

The library, which houses Netherton Arts Centre, would be switched to the Savoy Centre in Northfield Road, Netherton, under plans drawn up to make the service more efficient, improve access and save cash. Dudley Council bosses have launched a consultation and are asking people for their views. The consultation closes on November 11 and the results will be shared at a meeting of the cabinet in December.

Councillor Adrian Turner, cabinet member for libraries, said: "Netherton Library provides a great service and is popular with many residents. Asking people to tell us what they would like helps us plan ahead."

People can take part in the consultation during library opening hours which are: Mondays and Fridays, 9am-1pm and 2-7pm; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm; Wednesdays from 9.30am-1pm and 2-5pm; and on Saturdays from 9am-1pm.

Town ready for lights switch on

Brierley Hill is set for its annual Christmas lights switch on celebration.

The event will take place at the Moor Centre on November 19 from 1pm to 5pm. Free activities will include a Christmas grotto, reindeer, stilt walking elves, fairground rides, a bouncy castle, face painting and a caricaturist.

Father Christmas will switch on the lights at 5pm.

Jobs boost for region with £3m business cash award

More than 100 jobs are set to be created in Sandwell and Dudley thanks to a £3 million Government cash injection to boost businesses. The money has been secured with support from Sandwell Council and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and will assist four local businesses and one in neighbouring Dudley to expand their business operations.

It followed a submission by the council as part of round two of the Regional Growth Fund.

Dudleychrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Council staff in transfer plan

The findings of a report being prepared by Dudley Council as part of plans which could see up to 500 authority staff transferred to a new company set up to carry out repairs on homes are set to go before borough bosses next month.

The council gave the go-ahead in principle earlier this year to establish a new way of providing the repairs and maintenance of the council's housing stock of 23,000 homes with a "joint venture company".

It is designed to deliver a repairs and maintenance service for the council's housing stock. Bosses say it is hoped it will provide "better value for money" by integrating the council's resources with the private sector.

The council also says that it would be able to retain more influence over future service delivery than a traditional tender process would allow and that this would help to ensure services in the future.

Employees within the council's building services division would be employed by the new company in a move which would see their terms and conditions protected, the authority says.

Councillor Adrian Turner, cabinet member for housing, libraries and adult learning, said the council was still working on the plans in an attempt to ensure that the authority got the best value for money deal possible.

"Since cabinet's approval in the summer, we have been carrying out work to determine the scope of the potential contract to ensure the council is safeguarded and is getting best value for money," he said.

Councillor Turner added: "Work is ongoing, and the findings are planned to be reported to cabinet at the end of this year."

The successful businesses are Angle Ring Co Ltd, Tipton; Caparo Precision Strip, West Bromwich; Pargat & Co Ltd, West Bromwich; NDC Polythene Ltd, Old Hill and Thomas Dudley in Dudley.

The money will be shared among the businesses who will generate a further £11m investment themselves.

Sandwell Council said that it expected the investment would create 115 new jobs and safeguard a further 156 posts during the lifetime of the projects.

Future

The five businesses will now have to go through a period where their future plans will be scrutinised by the Department for Business Innovation & Skills prior to final contracts being signed.

Councillor Ian Jones, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for jobs and economy, said: "This is great news for the businesses and great news for Sandwell and the wider Black Country."

"The council is proud of the co-ordinating role it played in pulling the RGF bid together and emphasises Sandwell Council's commitment to work with local businesses."

However, Councillor Jones added the award was just a "drop in the ocean" of cash that used to come to the West Midlands via the Regional Development Agency which the Government has withdrawn.

"It is a fraction of the cash we previously got," he added.

Elevenes for a golden couple



Thomas Woodbine 72 and Marlene Woodbine 68. They met while in the services and will be celebrating their Golden Wedding on 11.11.2011 at 11.00am. Inset on their big day. They were married at Oxford Register Office.

Black Country couple Tom and Marlene Woodbine could never fail to remember their wedding anniversary – it's at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

And this time – in the 11th year of the century – it's their golden anniversary.

The Armistice Day link is fitting for a couple who were both in the forces when they met and married after a whirlwind romance.

Tom, now aged 72, and Marlene, 68, of Durham Road, Netherton, did not at first

realise the significance of the time and date of their wedding, although they knew it was Remembrance Day.

But ever since, when they celebrate their own special anniversary, they spare a thought for those who have lost their lives in war.

"We think it's a miracle that it was such a memorable date and time and the number 11 has figured large in our lives – we often exchange a glance if we spot the clock says 11.11," said Tom, a retired electrician.

RBL club is forced to close

A British Legion club in the Black Country has shut suddenly, just days before Remembrance Sunday.

The Blackheath British Legion Memorial Club, which had been running for around 90 years, has been forced to close due to its inability to cover its rent.

Dwindling numbers at the Powke Lane social club meant staff could not cover payments to the national British Legion office and members voted for it to cease trading.

The British Legion branch however continues to operate and the Remembrance parade on November 13 is expected to attract around 2,500 people.

Wayne Parkes, branch secretary of Blackheath's Royal British Legion said the club had fallen victim to the tough economic conditions. He added: "A special general meeting was called and the members were told the club was no longer financially viable. Over 90 per cent of the voting members present agreed the closure."

Blackheath Councillor Bob Price said: "It's a piece of history that's sad to lose. Obviously the people that used to use it are no longer there and I hate to see places like this disappear."

Meeting of history group

The next meeting of Stourbridge Historical Society will take place on November 17.

Brian Draper will give a talk on Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale at 7.30pm. The meeting will be held in the Ambleside Room at Stourbridge Town Hall. Visitors are welcome.

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Savers turning to building societies

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People in the West Midlands are turning to building societies to look after their savings as the ongoing financial crisis continues to bite hard.

People choosing to place their savings in building societies rose at the start of the cash crisis as confidence in banks plummeted.

And bosses from the region's leading societies said it was a trend which had continued as savers continued to deposit large sums and new members open accounts.

Bosses from the Tipton and Coseley Building Society said residents had placed around £4.5 million savings with them in August alone – compared with £1.3m at the same time last year. Officials said the sum was close to the record amount residents saved with the society in July 2010 of £5.9m.

Building society chief executive Chris Martin said: "The £4.5m amount is the total figure after withdrawals and other transactions have been carried out. It shows people have faith in building societies as a safe pair of hands for their money. The point is that from the beginning the money does not belong to the society but its members."

Security

"The main priority is to protect that money and ensure it is looked after on behalf of members. It is about providing security at a challenging time."

Savings in Dudley Building Society rose by more than £7 million over the last year. At this stage in 2010, there was £284,089,000 saved in the building society, and this has increased to £291,340,000.

Chief executive Geoff Caves said the firm had not been actively promoting any offers but said the increase was "very positive". He said: "People want to save when there's a downturn because they want to be prepared for the impact it could have on them."

Bosses from the West Bromwich said they were unable to provide figures for over the last few months for a comparison as they were in a closed period ahead of its half-year results.

But they said 29,500 new savers had joined the society during the last financial year placing the total membership at nearly 540,000.

Divisional director for the society Stephen Leonard said: "Our savings products have appeared in the best buy tables more than 900 times this year so far, which helps members during a time of sustained economic difficulty."

Louise Holmes, spokeswoman for financial information company MoneyFacts, said: "In the savings account market, building societies offer some of the more competitive rates compared to the banks."

Walk is just the ticket



Bus driver Dave Gerrard and Dudley Group of Hospitals fundraiser Karen Phillips celebrate £1,250 being raised

Bus drivers have handed over £1,250 to a Dudley hospital. The cash was raised by walking one of their usual routes.

The colleagues, joined by family and friends, traced the eight-mile 246 bus route from Dudley bus station to Stourbridge town centre to help raise money for the children's unit at Russells Hall Hospital.

It was organised by driver Dave Gerrard, aged 67, who is based at Pensnett depot and persuaded his National Express colleagues to get involved.

Mr Gerrard, who lives in Amblecote and drives on a number of routes around Dudley, gave a cheque to staff from the unit when they visited the garage.

He said: "We're really pleased with how much we have raised and we are already planning to do it again next year."

They managed to complete the walk in just over two hours. The money raised will help pay for overnight beds needed for parents to stay with their children when they are poorly.



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Yes to academy bid

Governors have voted through plans to transform a Halesowen high school into an academy – despite mass opposition from teachers and parents.

The Earls High School will become an academy by the start of next year, with school chiefs claiming the decision will give more control over budgets.

Around 100 people turned out to protest against the plan last month, claiming there had not been a thorough consultation, claiming the move would make the school less accountable.

Vice principal Richard Jacobs said he believed the decision was “very positive” – and reassured worried staff and parents that the school would continue to run exactly as it is currently.

People lend support in merger row

More than 1,000 shoppers signed petitions calling for a fresh consultation over the proposed merger of Halesowen and Cradley Heath fire stations at a rally against the cuts. Dozens of people turned out at the hour-long rally.

Firefighters, union representatives and campaigners spoke at the rally in Halesowen at the weekend.

Campaigners are considering legal action if West Midlands Fire Authority persists with the plan to close Halesowen fire station and axe the crew, leaving one crew to cover both areas.

Fire Brigades Union representative Andy Dennis said the proposals were “vastly different” now than when the merger was first agreed in 2009.

“Back then, we were promised there would be two crews, and that a new joint station would be built in a suitable location to serve both areas,” he said.

“Both of those things have now been scrapped, meaning the plans are different enough that a new public consultation needs to be held.”

He said figures show that of the £1.1million the authority claims it will save by axing one engine, more than £800,000 was wages, and bosses have vowed the move will not lead to redundancies, just redeployment.

“So in real terms, they are

actually saving less than £300,000 on running the building – is that really worth it?” he added.

Union worker and Halesowen resident Tony Barnsley said the rally had been well supported.

“We got a lot of good feedback and many people feel the way I do – that as a Halesowen resident, I have the right to be safe in my own home,” he said. “I would like to know what price they are putting on our lives.”

Halesowen & Rowley Regie MP James Morris has also joined the fight against the cuts and vowed to support the campaign group in seeking legal advice.

“Members agreed we should be looking at all possible options for opposing the plans, including a legal challenge,” he said.

“It does seem what the fire service originally consulted on was substantially different from the plans they now intend to implement.”

Pupil Kieran earns his stripes at police station



Kieran Graham, 11, of Halesowen, with officers Ian Smith, Mark Devereaux, Steve Franklin, Carl Foster with Falcon and Keiron Davies, with Tito

Schoolboy Kieran Graham was given a taste of life on the beat when he was taken for a spin in a police car.

It was a dream come true for the 11-year-old from Halesowen who wants to be a policeman when he grows up.

The visit to Tipton Police Station was organised by the Wishing Well charity at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley. Kieran, a pupil at Newfield Park Primary School in Halesowen, spent a few days on the children's ward there in June.

Builders set to move into JB's

Contractors will move in to begin work to revamp former Dudley rock club JB's this week as its new owners aim to reopen by Christmas.

Former fixtures such as the bars and toilets will be ripped out and replaced, and the club in Dudley will be refitted with the latests sound system. Wolverhampton businessman Raj Kumar bought the club at an auction in September for £225,000, nine months after it closed down. “I will be spending next week talking to people in the local area to see what role they want us to play,” he said.

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'Tommy' going to be focus of ceremony

A war memorial honouring soldiers who served in both world wars will be at the centre of a Remembrance service at the Black Country Living Museum.

The eight-ton bronze figure, nicknamed 'Tommy', is dedicated to those who served in both wars and commemorates former Springfield Brewery workers in Wolverhampton.

Twelve standard bearers, representing the British Legion, will be attending the ceremony and Major Ray Baddams, Salvation Army Chaplain will be conducting the service.

David Eveleigh, for the legion, said: "The memorial is a testimony to the bravery of local heroes and we feel privileged not only to be able to hold the Remembrance Service here at the museum but also to keep alive the memories of Black Country soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice."

The Springfield Brewery Retired Employees Association has held a service at the monument each year since 1923. The Remembrance Service was originally intended to commemorate those who died in the First World War but after the Second World War the ceremony was extended to focus on both conflicts. The event takes place at 10.30 am on November 11.

● The Black Country Living Museum has won a local award. The site in Tipton Road, Dudley, was named the Best Daytime Family Attraction award at the Beacon Best Awards 2011. Beacon Radio listeners nominated more than 1,000 businesses within 11 categories.

Drinkers putting the bite on pub over new dog ban

Pet owners are boycotting an award-winning Black Country pub after bosses banned dogs. The Beacon Hotel, Sedgley has angered customers who say pets have been allowed inside for as long as they can remember.

They are now collecting a petition in a bid to try to get the decision reversed. However, Beacon landlord John Hughes said he had become concerned for people's safety after three "serious complaints" were made. One of the incidents involved a man being bitten on the ankle.

The Beacon, which has been named West Midlands Pub of the Year by Camra for four years running, was one of only a few pubs where dogs were allowed, said Mr Hughes.

Victoria Perry, aged 33, said she was shocked to see a notice in the pub informing customers that dogs would be banned. She has been taking Wilf, her four-year-old King

dudleychrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Charles Spaniel, along to The Beacon for four years, and has been going there regularly for the last eight years.

She claims to have the support of scores of regulars in her fight against the new rules.

Mrs Perry, a nurse in A&E at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital, said: "Dogs have been welcome as long as anyone can remember so I was really shocked when I saw that notice."

Atmosphere

"A lot of people go to the pub for the good beer and the atmosphere – but also because it is dog-friendly. People take their dogs out for a walk and then pop in for a drink." Mr Hughes said: "Pubs that sell food no longer allow dogs but, as we only focus on ale, we tend to get more than our fair share here. We love dogs, don't get me wrong, and it is regrettable that we have had to make this decision."

"But I have a duty of care to my customers. We have chil-

dren's areas and I am concerned that something serious could happen." Mr Hughes sparked controversy last year when he banned a blind dog from his pub, saying there had been a number of complaints about 12-year-old mongrel Toby urinating on the floor.



Front, Victoria Perry with Louise Sharp, and Wilf, and Chris Sharp, with Max who are organising a petition.

£10,000 poppy target

The Bewdley branch of the Royal British Legion has launched its annual Poppy Appeal – with their sights set on reaching the £10,000 benchmark for the first time.

Councillor Paul Gittins, who is chairman of the branch helped launch this year's appeal with a cheque for £1,000 which he raised during his stint as Mayor of Bewdley last year. A concert was held at St Anne's Church to launch this year's appeal. Last year, the branch raised a record £9,891.60 for the appeal. For more information about the appeal, call Councillor Gittins on 01299 404113.

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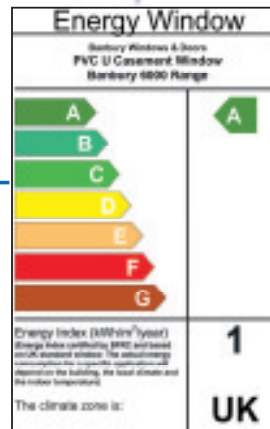
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Dickens of a festive spectacle

A Christmas Carol – the musical
The Grand
Wolverhampton

Bilston Operatic Society's adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic, from the incredibly colourful extravaganza of Mr Fezziwig's Christmas bash to the Busby Berkeley-style dance routine in the Ghost of Christmas Present's vision, is a spectacle to behold.

Right from the start it's apparent the company has put the time and effort into producing this show with the wonderfully colourful costumes and the lively choreography of an impressive cast.

REVIEW

Word perfect, Stephen Harper portrays the central character of despised miser Ebenezer Scrooge who hates Christmas and everything it stands for.

He is visited by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley, played by Jon Dempsey, whose ghostly shimmering looked a little odd, but his voice more than makes up for that.

He warns Scrooge of the visitations of three ghosts who aim to show him the error of his ways.

The visions from the spectres of

Christmas past, present and future are cleverly done.

There were some technical and timing issues which will surely be ironed out over the coming performances but overall it is a wonderful show which the whole cast and crew should be proud of.

Special mention should go to Greg Yates who camped it up marvellously as Mr Fezziwig and filled the theatre with the sound of his powerful and clear voice. He was aided and abetted by the energetically, animated Maggie Page as his wife. A Christmas Carol runs until Saturday November 12.

Danny Farragher

Emin's art is part of exhibition

A new artwork by controversial artist Tracey Emin is on show at the Broadfield House Glass Museum in Kingswinford.

The piece Trust Me is a neon light installation and is on loan from the White Cube gallery in London.

Her neon pieces are created from her own hand-drawn designs and made in London.

Emin, who has been seen recently as the final celebrity to research her family history in the most recent series of Who Do You Think You Are?, has won many awards for her work.

The piece is part of the Light Fantastic exhibition at the Dudley Council museum which explores how six artists use neon in their work.

As well as Emin, the artists featured in the display are Sarah Blood, Sharon Foley, Jessica Lloyd-Jones, Keith Brocklehurst and Richard William Wheeler.

Light Fantastic runs until February 19. Admission is free.

It's fitness fun for the over 50s

Older people across Dudley are being given the chance to keep fit – with yoga, belly dancing and Zumba classes.

Age UK's Spring Board project has funded a new activity base at the Brierley Hill Methodist Church.

Sessions, for those age 50 and over, will run every Monday between 10am and 4pm at the Bank Street Church and they include special sessions aimed at men.

To mark the official launch of the new sessions an official opening was held.

Those who went along got the chance to enjoy some free refreshments as well as exercises such as Zumba, belly dancing, line dancing and yoga.

Springboard Co-ordinator Jenny Worwood: "We already have a centre at Merry Hill but it has proved so popular we have expanded. The sessions are aimed at any one over the age of 50."

For further information contact 01384 572365.



Tai Chi instructor Barry Westley is pictured leading a Chi Baton Yoga class for some of the older residents at Brierley Hill Methodist Church, Bank Street, Brierley Hill

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Council is fighting back against spurious claims

A woman who tripped over a neighbour's bin bag and someone who slipped on a wet piece of litter are among hundreds of spurious personal injury claims lodged with Dudley Council.

More than 830 people have lodged claims amounting to around £4 million with the authority since the start of 2008 – but 464 of those cases have been ruled

“spurious” and thrown out. Council bosses have revealed they have paid out just £500,000 for the claims.

They warned greedy personal injury lawyers who launch dozens of no-win, no-fee claims that they would “rigorously defend” such cases, which in recent months have included someone who fell over in the rain on a pedestrian crossing and tried to sue.

Seriously

Councillor Tim Wright, said the authority would also consider claiming back any costs incurred by the authority if the claim was unfounded.

“No matter how silly a claim sounds, obviously we always undertake a full investigation,” he said. “But we will not take money out of the taxpayer's pocket to fund

these spurious claims.” He said the council was willing to admit liability where appropriate – but in the past four years that had amounted to just 99 cases.

A further 269 claims are still being negotiated. Finance councillor David Blood said: “While we take our responsibilities and genuine liabilities very seriously indeed, we also take the need to protect taxpayers' money very seriously too.”

“Public sector organisations such as councils can often be seen as an easy target for compensation claims but people need to be aware we will not be taken for a ride.”

“While the authority will always rigorously defend spurious claims the council will also always fully accept its responsibility to compensate individuals where the authority is found to be liable.”

Other nonsense claims have included a roller skater who was knocked over by another skater at a leisure centre.

Recovery hope over millions

Hopes have been raised that a Midland council will get back millions of pounds it invested in Icelandic banks following a court ruling.

Wyre Forest District Council invested £9 million in the banks and has been able to reclaim just over a third since they collapsed two and a half years ago.

Council bosses have repeatedly stated they were confident they will get most of the cash back as it has been allocated priority status, meaning it should receive a return of 90p for every £1 invested.

However, bond holders in the banks challenged this for a second time.

But the Icelandic Supreme Court has now ruled in a test case that the priority status can remain.

The council must now wait to see if this verdict is applied to all creditors – including itself – but bosses say the result is a positive step forward.

The council has a £3m deposit with Landsbanki which was due to mature in late October 2008. The court action has been ongoing for over a year and has involved councils from across the country. Council leader John Campion said: “We are delighted the Icelandic Supreme Court has found in favour of UK local authorities and other UK wholesale depositors.”

A ruby from Rubens



Manny Johal, right, with staff Lil Bahadur Khatri, Debbie Smith and Mehnaaz Gul

A Black Country father has launched his first Indian restaurant in Dudley, creating jobs for seven people.

Manny Johal, aged 34, from Penn, Wolverhampton, has named the restaurant, at Dudley's Merry Hill Centre, after his three-year-old son Ruben.

Rubens Restaurant, in the “Eat Central” area of the centre, is now open and Manny is employing four full and three part-time staff.

He previously worked for Johal Catering, one of the largest Indian food catering firms in the country, which is owned by family friends, as a marketing executive. “After spending more than 12 years working in the catering industry, it is a huge personal achievement to be able to launch my first eatery in such an established shopping centre as Merry Hill,” he said.

Kelly Reed, marketing manager at Merry Hill, said: “We believe variety is the spice of life, and we are committed to catering to a diverse range of tastes. We are sure shoppers will enjoy our new addition.”

Metal thieves targeted

Undercover police officers are being dispatched to scrap metal dealers across the West Midlands to conduct a series of test purchases looking for stolen metal.

The covert purchases are being made as part of Operation Stealth, a scheme launched by police to cut down on metal thieves plaguing the region.

A day of action to promote the operation saw 20 scrapyards across Dudley visited and Stealth posters warning of police action were put up. One man was fined £500 and issued a notice of prosecution by Customs and Revenue officers, who joined the team and carried out 35 dip-tests on scrap vans, looking for illegal red diesel fuel, while Environment Agency workers were on-hand checking for waste carriers' licences.

Sgt Jay Gregory, who led the action, said the day had raised awareness. “Scrap dealers are now in no doubt of the action they will face if they are caught accepting stolen goods,” he said.

Insp Richard Jones said since Operation Stealth was launched in July, the number of metal-related offences had fallen by around half.

Deaths at work increase

The number of people killed at work in the West Midlands increased by 44 per cent in the past year, new figures claim.

There were 13 fatal injuries in the year to March, up from nine in the previous 12 months. The number of deaths had fallen in each of the last three years. The region mirrored the national picture, with deaths on the rise but falls in the number of people injured and unwell at work.

There were 2,259 major injuries reported, including amputations, fractures and burns, compared to 2,464 in 2009/10. Total injuries were down 5.7 per cent.

Nationally 171 fatal injuries were suffered in the workplace, up from 147 in the previous 12 months.

Major injuries were down from 26,268 to 24,700 and there were 90,653 other injuries serious enough to keep people off work for four or more days, the Health and Safety Executive statistics show.

In 2009/10 the figure was 96,427. An estimated 1.2 million people said they were suffering from an illness caused or made worse by their work, down from 1.3 million in 2009/10.

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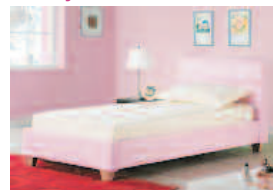
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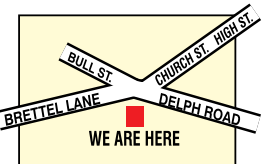
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with us who die,
we shall not
sleep, though
poppies grow in
Flanders fields*

Colonel John McCrae

Television personality Gethin Jones launched The Royal British Legion's 2011 Poppy Appeal on Thursday 27th October as the UK's leading Armed Forces charity announced a £40 million fundraising goal in its most ambitious campaign ever.

To mark its 90th anniversary year, the Legion launched its Poppy Appeal under the slogan of standing "shoulder to shoulder with all who serve." The theme is backed by an online campaign and a chart-topping official single recorded by Robin Gibb and The Soldiers.

Holding Out For A Hero presenter Gethin Jones said: "I'm honoured to be launching the Poppy Appeal. I've experienced first-hand what life is like for our brave Service men and women on operations and how much the British public's support means to them.

"They risk so much for us every single day. I ask everyone to throw their support behind the Appeal and to wear their poppy with pride."

The Poppy Appeal raises funds needed to support those currently serving in Afghanistan, veterans of past conflict and their families.

The Legion unveiled a major social media campaign (shouldertoshoulder.org.uk) to capture public support and encouragement for British Armed Forces. Members of the public are encouraged to pin a poppy to an online photograph, add a message of support, and place it alongside thousands of others on an interactive wall.

"Of course, everyone who wears the paper poppy is also standing shoulder to shoulder," said Legion Director of Fundraising Russell Thompson OBE. "It doesn't really matter whether you wear your poppy on the street or online - just so long as you wear your poppy with pride."

The Royal British Legion: The Royal British Legion stands shoulder to shoulder with all who serve. It is the nation's leading Armed Forces charity providing care and support to all members of the British Armed Forces past and present and their families. It is also the national Custodian of Remembrance and safeguards the Military Covenant between the nation and its Armed Forces. It is best known for the annual Poppy Appeal and its emblem, the red poppy. www.britishlegion.org.uk

Each year the nation expresses its unequivocal support for The Royal British Legion's charity work through the Poppy Appeal, appealing the need to help the Afghan generation of the Armed Forces and their families - today and for the rest of their lives.

The annual Poppy Appeal is the Legion's major fundraising campaign and their aim this year is to surpass last year's total and raise £40 million. This will allow the Legion to continue the work that means so much to the thousands of serving and ex-Service people and their families, who approach the charity every year for help. They reached their target of £36 million for 2010.

The Legion helps people of all ages, providing financial, social and emotional help to all those who have been affected by conflict. Increasingly they see younger people coming to them for help. Beneficiaries range from children to widows, from single mothers to pensioners, in fact anyone who finds themselves in need of help. Some 9.5 million people are eligible to approach us for support.

The Poppy Appeal distributes around 45 million poppies, 100,000 wreaths and sprays and 750,000 Little Remembrance Crosses. These items are made at the Legion's Poppy Factory in Richmond, Surrey.

There are many ways to support The Poppy Appeal either individually or as a company. And now you can show your support digitally - by email, on your mobile and on Facebook.

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Buy official Royal British Legion merchandise online at our Poppy Shop. Visit www.poppysshop.org.uk now!

Buy a poppy online We have lapel poppies, little remembrance crosses, silk poppies etc available online for the cost of a donation plus postage and packaging.

Donate via your mobile Text the word POPPY to 70090 - to make a donation to The Royal British Legion. (Texts cost £5.00 plus your standard network message charge.) At least £4.00* goes directly to the Legion.

* Service provided by The Royal British Legion. Customer Service number is 0844 991 0078. By using this service you agree that we may contact you for future campaigns, unless you send STOP to 70090.



At the launch, The Soldiers performed the official Poppy Appeal song for 2011, I've Gotta Get a Message to You, recorded with pop legend Robin Gibb.

Robin, who wrote the chart-topping single with his brothers Barry and Maurice of the Bee Gees in 1968, said the single is a "moving tribute to our serving personnel who lay their lives on the line for our country every day."

"Although the song was not written all those years back about soldiers, it can represent the human emotions of Servicemen - or in this case, a single soldier," he added. "It's about being trapped in a corner far from home, brave but scared and thinking of loved ones. These men and women deserve our respect and support."

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Rousing start to festive countdown

IT'S sure to be a rousing start to the festive period. The tattoo will feature 1,000 of the best military musicians and performers from across Europe and the UK.

And we've teamed up with the people at Birmingham's NIA to offer nine readers the chance to win a pair of tickets to the Birmingham International Christmas Tattoo being held in December.

For the first time the Norwegian King's Guard Band and their drill team will be present, joining the world-famous Band and Drums of Her Majesty's Royal Marines and the Corps of Drums of the Yorkshire Volunteers.

Gymnastic

Joining them will be the Band of the Liberation army from The Netherlands and the cream of British youth with the National Youth Marching Band.

The Tattoo is due to be held at the NIA on Saturday, December 10 at 6pm and Sunday, December 11 at 2pm and you can win tickets for the Saturday evening performance.

On top of all the musical mastery, there will be a dazzling gymnastic display from the Blue Falcons Gymnastic Display Team. The Inter-Service Field Gun Competition will bring their heavy guns to the arena along with the massed standard bearers from the Royal British Legion and there will be a dog display.

Finale

The performance will end with a spectacular festive finale featuring all the 1,000 performers.

Tickets are on sale now, priced at £22.50, £20, £18.50, £16.50 and £14.50 plus booking and transaction fees and are available online at www.theticketfactory.com or by calling 0844 338 8000.

More information on the Tattoo can be found at www.birmingham-tattoo.co.uk

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Closing date: Thursday, November 17. Usual rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

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thechronicle

Fire services pay out £200,000

Fire services in West Midlands and Staffordshire paid out more than £200,000 asking for advice from consultants, new figures reveal.

Experts were brought in to help in areas such as IT, website design, health and safety and purchasing between January 2010 and September 2011. The spending – totalling £212,097 – comes as bosses at both brigades try to shave millions of pounds off their budgets for the next four years.

Around £149,600 was spent on outside help from consultancy firms by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service during the 18 month period, while the bill for West Midlands Fire Service was

£62,497. The spending in Staffordshire included £59,477 on employing an equality and diversity consultant. And around £24,517 was paid out on business expertise, although this was later reimbursed by Improvement and Efficiency for West Midlands.

Director of organisational development at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Becci Bryant said the spending equated to approximately 0.2 per cent of the service's total budget.

"There are occasions when we require the services of consultants. This is usually because we don't have the expertise in a certain area or we require the services of an independent

party. Decisions to employ consultants are not taken lightly and ensuring we receive good value for money is always at the forefront of our minds," she said.

Among the spending by West Midlands Fire Service was around £9,300 paid out to human resources firm Howard Parvin Personnel Consultancy and £1,600 to IT firm UC4 Ltd.

Chairman of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority John Edwards said: "The Fire Authority has a good reputation as an efficient and effective value-for-money organisation and our limited use of external consultancy support on a very limited basis is evidence of this."

Offender list on the increase

The number of people added to the sex offender list in Worcestershire, Shropshire and Herefordshire almost doubled in the last year.

Courts across the area covered by West Mercia Police imposed 77 Sexual Offence Prevention Orders (SOPOs) over the 12 months leading up to March 31 – up from 41 the year before. The figures are revealed in the annual report of West Mercia Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

The report details how the police work with other criminal justice agencies to protect the public from known offenders, such as the 792 registered sex offenders in the area – as of March 31 – 249 violent offenders and 10 other criminals labelled as "dangerous".

Detective Superintendent Martin Lakeman, head of public protection for West Mercia Police, said: "Over the past 12 months agencies have worked effectively together to manage those that pose the greatest risk."

Museum fun is out of this world

Visitors to a Black Country attraction have been hunting for aliens and creating their own spaceship as part of events taking place during the half-term holiday.

Staff at the Red House Glass Cone, in Wordsley, organised activities to keep youngsters and their families entertained during the week.

Visitors had to find alien spaceships hidden around the site.

The cone then hosted its No Tricks, Just Treats where youngsters were able to take part in a pottery workshop.

Experts created witches hats and ghosts from glass and children's entertainer put on magic shows.

Visitors previously had the chance to make their own glass tiles which were completed by experts at the site ready to collect.

The Red House Glass Cone, High Street, Wordsley, is open every day, 10am to 4pm. Admission is free.



Jan Edgar with her grandchildren Ben Venskus, aged seven, and Millie Edgar, 10 at the Red House Glass Cone

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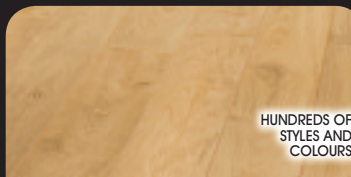


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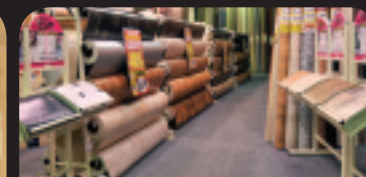
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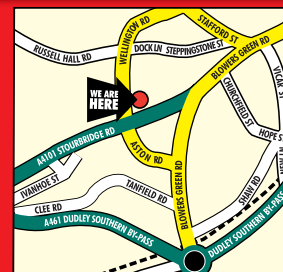
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Travel is by coach and ferry to Andernach where you join the mps Amsterdam. Facilities on board include an open sun deck with a partially covered terrace, a spacious lounge bar with panoramic windows, where the nightly entertainment takes place, a small souvenir shop and the entire ship including cabins is air-conditioned.

Ports of call include Rudesheim, Speyer, Gernersheim, Strasbourg, Breisach and Basel, in northern Switzerland, from where an included excursion to Lucerne takes place; Kehl, Mannheim, Mainz and Cologne, with an included Cologne Highlights walking tour.

Price includes: return coach travel, return ferry crossings, full-board accommodation and an on-board entertainment programme.

INFO

Accommodation: Full board
Departure date: June 18
Duration: 10 days

Single supplements apply

Organised by The River Cruise Line (ABTA W0552)

thechronicle

£1 deal secures the future of light festival

dudleychrons@expressandstar.co.uk

A popular waterways festival in Brierley Hill has been saved after an events company offered a £1 fee to take it on.

Staffordshire-based CCEM has struck a deal with Dudley Council to buy the rights to host the annual Festival of Water and Light at the Waterfront.

The event attracts more than 12,000 people every year. Boating enthusiasts were left disappointed when this year's event was cancelled last month due to funding difficulties – but CCEM, based in Tamworth, has agreed to take on full responsibility for all future events.

Council leader Les Jones due to formally sign off the agreement on Tuesday – and he has welcomed the deal as "good news" for the popular event.

"The problem was, when times are tough like they are now, sponsorship for events like this is more difficult to come by," he said. "This meant the council had to make up the difference – and in the current climate that is unsustainable."

"So I took the decision to cancel this year's event."

Fantastic

"Fortunately, CCEM are willing to take it on themselves and although it's too late for this year it can now continue next year, which is fantastic."

He said an Asset Purchase Agreement was now being drawn up with CCEM, which has collaborated with the council to hold the event for the past four years, with a nominal payment of £1 to the council.

Boating enthusiast Paddy Grice, who helped organise a last-minute replacement festival when this year's was cancelled, also welcomed the news. "I am very glad that this event will be able to go forward – the reason we staged the event was to keep the date in the diary and show there is still interest there," he said.

"CCEM have done wonderfully in previous years and I'm confident we are in safe hands for future events."

Pensioner's peak challenge



Allen Birch, aged 91, and friend Andrea Clarke, both of Bewdley, with Help For Heroes county co-ordinator Ian Baldry

Sprightly pensioner Allen Birch has handed over more than £3,000 to armed forces charity Help for Heroes after conquering Snowdon.

The 91-year old great-grandfather, a former soldier in the Royal Engineers, was congratulated on his "tremendous effort".

It is the fourth time Mr Birch, of Wribbenhall, Bewdley, has tackled the 3,560ft mountain since his 86th birthday.

Previous outings have raised thousands for Bewdley Scouts, the town's

Methodist Church and Kidderminster Hospital. This time he generated £3,320 in sponsorship and is planning his next climb in 2012, which will be in aid of the Midlands Air Ambulance.

Mr Birch said: "I think it is a really important charity. He served during the Second World War in Hamburg and Egypt, building bridges and clearing mines."

Ian Baldry, Worcestershire county co-ordinator for the charity, visited Mr Birch's home to collect the cheque and thank him.

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THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE

BBC1, 9.15pm

The dependable Huw Edwards presents coverage of the annual event from the Royal Albert Hall in the presence of the Queen and other members of the royal family, and it's impossible not to be moved by an event that honours the people who have preserved our way of life. A whole who of big names provide the entertainment, with Cliff Richard, Katherine Jenkins, and Joe McElerry performing alongside the Massed Bands of the Household Division, and the bands of the Royal Air Force and the Brigade of Gurkhas.

6.00 Breakfast **9.00** Bargain Hunt Famous Show (F) **9.45** Lord Mayor's Show 2011 **10.10** BBC News Regional News; Weather **10.15** Formula 1: The Abu Dhabi Grand Prix - Qualifying. Live coverage from the 'Vic Motors Circuit' (Starttime 10.00pm). **10.30** Live Boxing: The British Championships. **10.00** Remembrance Week. **10.05** BBC News Regional News; Weather. **10.15** The Inspector's Show with Cuthbert and Stephenson (F) **10.30** Tonight's the Night.

6.35 **Crucial** **Come Dine with Me**. The nine remaining couples perform ballroom or Latin routines.

6.50 **Herb**. Morgan joins forces with enigmatic wizard Alator to reveal Merlin's secret to the world.

7.05 **The House of Commons**. Jemima Fothergill announces the all-important numbers.

7.15 **The Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance**. Coverage of the annual event paying tribute to the victims of war and conflict, held at the Royal Albert Hall in the presence of the Queen.

10.30 **BBC News Weekend**. National Lottery Update.

11.15 **FILE** **Slaves**. (2003) M. Soft thriller, starring Mel Gibson and Joaquin Phoenix.

12.30 **Newsweek**. **12.35** **Sign Zone**. Foot on News (F) **12.35** **BBC News**.

6.00 **CBSec**. **2000** **CBSec**. **11.30** **Football Focus**. **12.15** **The Sky at Night** (F) **12.30** **Contest** (F) **12.40** **Film: Carefree**. (1935) **12.55** **Film: Singin' in the Rain**. (1932) Musical comedy, starring Gene Kelly. **1.30** **Escape to the Country** (F) **1.30** **Great British Food Festival**. (F) **2.30** **Play It** (F).

6.30 **Dad's Army**. The platoon plays a pageant (F).

7.00 **Draw Emotions: The Race to Smash the Ostrich**. James Holland presents an analysis of the 1943 air attacks by the RAF on German dams and examines whether the true impact has been underestimated (F).

7.30 **Come Fly with Me (The Story of Pan Am)**. How Pan American World Airways kick-started the jet age.

7.00 **Q&A**. With Sandi Toksvik, Al Murray, and Dara O'Brian.

7.55 **Armed George Harrison - Living in the Material World**. Part one of two. Martin Scorsese documentary tracing Harrison's early life in Liverpool, Beatlemania advent and his fascination with Indian culture, both musical and spiritual. Concludes tomorrow.

11.50 **Slaves to the South**. Memorable covers of classic songs by the group. (F).

12.30 **Later with Jools Holland** (F) **12.35** **BBC News** **1.00** **Clock**.

6.00 **GTV: Mini** **GTV: 2.15** **GTV: 2.25** **Coronation Street** **11.05** **The Morning Show**. **12.05** **ITV News**. **12.30** **Film: Free Willy 2: The Adventure Home**. (1995) Family adventure, starring Jason James Richter. **2.00** **Film: Stool On My Mom's Wall**. (1992) Comedy, starring Sylvester Stallone. **2.30** **Regional Programme**. **3.30** **ITV News**. **4.05** **Live International Football**. England v Spain (Kick-off 5.15pm).

7.15 **How You've Been Framed**. Alan performing a humorous dance routine.

7.35 **Henry VIII's TV Soap**. A review of the week's small-screen highlights.

8.15 **The X Factor: Don't Stop Believing**. Don't O'Leary hosts the sixth live studio round as the remaining acts battle to get one step closer to that life-changing recording contract. The results can be seen tomorrow at 8pm.

9.55 **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.00** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.05** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.10** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.15** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.20** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.25** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.30** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.35** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.40** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.45** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.50** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **10.55** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.00** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.05** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.10** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.15** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.20** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.25** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.30** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.35** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.40** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.45** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.50** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **11.55** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **12.00** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **12.05** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **12.10** **Photo Morgan's Life**. **12.15** **Photo 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GAWROW'S LAW

BBC1, 9pm

Oscar Wilde once said that the law was an ass, but then, Garrow had a very one-track mind. As for as programme-makers are concerned, the law is a rich seam to be mined for dramatic gold, and they have done so brilliantly with this period drama, which is making a very welcome return. William Garrow is becoming one of TV's most loved legal eagles, and this series, starting his attempt to change the world through his work as a barrister, is a great ode to a real-life pioneer. In this opener, Garrow returns to the Bailey risking his reputation to defend James Hadfield, who is on trial for high treason for attempting to assassinate King George III.

6.00 Breakfast 6.00 The Andrew Marr Show. **9.25 Penetration** Sunday. The Concept Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.15 Formula 1: The Abu Dhabi Grand Prix - Live**. The 18th round of the season (Starttime 100pm). **3.30 The Police Show**. **5.00 Frozen Planet**. (F) **5.30 Point of View**. **5.55 Songs of Praise**.

6.00 BBC News: Regional News: Yorkshire.

6.25 Countryfile. Matt Baker and Ellie Harrison visit the Derwent Valley in Derbyshire.

7.25 Sunday Cruise. The result is announced, and renowned violinist Andre Rieu performs.

8.00 Autumnal Reminders. From the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

9.00 Garrow's Law. New series. The barrister defends a man accused of trying to assassinate the king.

10.00 BBC News: Regional News: Yorkshire.

10.25 News at 10. Extended edition, with Robin Conway and Andy Hamilton.

11.00 Ash & Rick O'Connell. (F)

11.25 FLEET Street. (2008) Premiere. Comedy starring Jennifer Aniston and Steve Zahn.

1.00 Weathernews. **1.15 Sign Zone**. Film 2011 with Claudia Winkleman. (F) **1.35 The Queen's Palace**. (F) **1.55 Holly: City**. (F) **3.35 BBC News**.

6.00 CBeebies. **2.00 CBBC**. **10.00 Something for the Weekend**. **11.20 Great British Food Festival**. (F) **12.30 Flint On Moonlight Bay**. (1954) Romantic musical comedy, starring Doris Day. **2.05 EastEnders**. **9.00 Rugby League**. **3.00 Peter Jones: How We Made Our Millions**. (F) **5.30 Songs of Praise**.

6.00 Roushthouse Smiles: The Country Highlights. Presented by David Dimbleby and Sophie Raworth.

7.00 Top Gear. Michael Sheen in the Star in a Reasonably Priced Car. (F)

8.00 News at 8. A Super Jubilee. New series. The construction of a wing for an Airbus A380 jumbo jet.

9.00 Autumnal Reminders. From the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

9.00 Garrow's Law. New series. The barrister defends a man accused of trying to assassinate the king.

10.00 BBC News: Regional News: Yorkshire.

10.25 News at 10. Extended edition, with Robin Conway and Andy Hamilton.

11.00 Ash & Rick O'Connell. (F)

11.25 FLEET Street. (2008) Premiere. Comedy starring Jennifer Aniston and Steve Zahn.

1.00 Weathernews. **1.15 Sign Zone**. Film 2011 with Claudia Winkleman. (F) **1.35 The Queen's Palace**. (F) **1.55 Holly: City**. (F) **3.35 BBC News**.

6.00 CITV: Mini CITV. **7.15 CITV**. **8.25 Mork**. (F) **9.30 Finger Tip**. **9.45 Film: The Adventure of Brer Rabbit**. (2008) Children's musical animation, with the voice of Nick Cannon. **10.00 ITV News**. **10.30 Live**. FA Cup Football. FC Halifax Town v Charlton Athletic. (Kick-off 12.30pm). **3.00 The X Factor**. (F) **5.30 Downtown Abbey**. (F)

6.00 Regional Programme.

6.15 ITV News: Yorkshire.

6.30 Henry VIII's TV Soap. A review of the week's small-screen highlights.

7.00 The One. A primary school teacher and a marketing manager take part.

8.00 The X Factor. The results, with performances by Larky Gogan and One Direction.

9.00 Fun in Celebrity. The One of the Week. Ant and Dec present as a fresh batch of famous faces wave goodbye to their lives of luxury and spend three weeks camping in the Australian jungle.

10.30 ITV News: Yorkshire.

10.45 FA Cup Highlights. Action from the first-round tie.

11.05 Real Crime with Eleri Ansell: The House. The case of murder John William Cooper. (F)

12.05 The Zone. ITV News Headlines. **2.00 Motorsport UK**. **2.35 ITV Nightscreen**. **3.30 ITV Morning News**.

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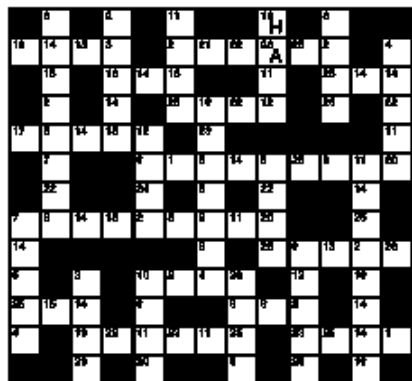
Please contact
Rob, Adam or Angela
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Brain Gym

No. 142

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

W	Q	R	T	D	B	Z	A	L	K	V	M	J
U	N	G	I	E	O	P	S	F	H	X	Y	C

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Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Police construction worker? (5/8)
- You won't care if you lose it (8)
- The half that's better if he goes outside (4)
- A fellow is a fair chap (6)
- The force of an phrase (8)
- Often found on the staff (7/6)
- Not the first time (8)
- A member of the opposition in Roman times (4)
- An affair to arouse curiosity (8)
- Are they all model patients in it? (5/8)

Down

- Nine dogs valiantly engaged (8/2)
- Glutton takes an age to finish a bird (8)
- In this place he really is mindless (4)
- They won't speak much about others (8)
- From the Australian land we received a reply (8)
- Knot sailors try to avoid (4)
- The whole world finds it illuminating (8)
- It's unusual and there's only one (8)
- Solid lump of dipping (8)
- Where doctors acquire a bedside manner? (6)
- A direction on gas (4)
- What the sea may do to a ship (4)

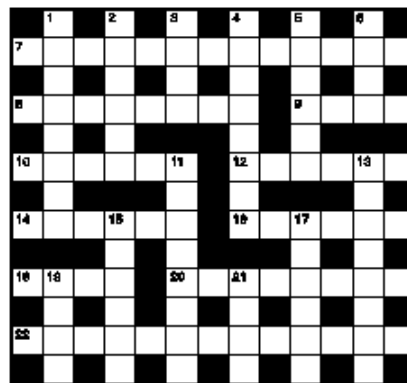
Quick Clues:

Across

- Remembrance (1/8)
- Succession (8)
- Reverence (4)
- Grab (8)
- Overall emphatically (8)
- Catchphrase (6)
- Cabbages, etc (6)
- Stimulus (4)
- Parient (8)
- Restriction (1/8)

Down

- Outer (8)
- Hardy (6)
- Uzzle (4)
- Domant (8)
- Account (6)
- The two (4)
- Alonzo (8)
- Authorize (8)
- Self (6)
- Mistakes (6)
- Rain heavily (4)
- Match (4)



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC Across: 1. Iola, 8. Machiavelli, 9. Sergeant, 10. Edna, 12. Sassa, 14. Spook, 15. Endless, 17. Sarah, 18. Poet, 19. Informal, 21. Chinlids, 22. Lure. Down: 2. Shovels, 3. Sassa, 4. Sassa, 5. Sassa, 6. Sassa, 7. Lure, 11. Sassa, 13. Sassa, 15. Sassa, 16. Sassa, 17. Sassa, 18. Sassa, 19. Sassa, 20. Sassa, 21. Sassa, 22. Sassa.

Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:



1		4	9	7		6		
4								8
		3		5		4	1	
			5		4	2		
2			8			5		
		4	1		2			
6	9				8			
7	1					4	9	
4		9	6	5				

Circlegram

Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters within each circle can be arranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?



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WORD PUZZLER
WORD SEARCH
NUMBER CRUNCH

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The top property guide for Dudley, Stourbridge, Halesowen and Kidderminster



This semi-detached property in Oldbury is on the market for offers based on £140,000



A neat rear garden is a particular feature of this three-bedroomed home

Well-presented semi available – £140,000

A well-presented semi-detached home in a popular residential location in Oldbury is for sale at offers based on £140,000.

The property, in Highbury Road, benefits from gas fired central heating and double glazing and comprising reception hall, open plan lounge/diner, fitted kitchen, laundry room with toilet of, side garage, three bedrooms, bathroom and large gardens.

Local shops can be found at Merivale island, with more at Oldbury town centre which is around a mile

away, while Bearwood is just two miles distant.

Recreational amenities include Barnford Hill Park, Langley Swimming Baths and Brandhall Golf Course, while schools are close by.

The house stands behind a frontage that is mainly brick paved with good off-street parking, 14ft 5in by 11ft garage and storm porch to a reception hall.

Garden

There is an open plan lounge/dining room – the lounge 11ft by 13ft and the dining area 8ft 9in by 10ft, the latter with patio doors to the garden.

The fully fitted kitchen measuring 10ft by 7ft 9in has a stainless steel one and a half bowl sink, base cupboards,

drawer unit, matching work top return with three base cupboards, drawers and space for appliances, dishwasher and fridge, high level wall cupboards, corner wine rack, built-in pantry and double doors to the laundry room with cupboards and plumbing for automatic washing machine and door to garden.

On the first floor are three bedrooms, one with built-in wardrobes, and a bathroom with panelled bath with electric shower over, pedestal wash hand basin and low flush wc.

Outside the larger than average and secluded rear garden with paved sun terrace, borders with conifers, lawn area and mature trees to rear.

For more details call Derek Spire estate agents on 0121 544 9595.

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ROWLEY REGIS, SIDAWAY CLOSE

A much improved and extended detached house, set in a cul-de-sac location, comprises of: Three Bedrooms, Refitted Kitchen, Modern Lounge, Separate Dining Area, Master with En-Suite, Refitted Bathroom, Driveway Parking for 3/4 Cars, Rear Garden, Unfurnished

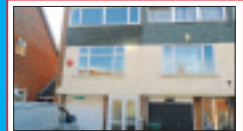
£750 PCM



ROWLEY REGIS, MOOR LANE

A large and spacious bungalow with great views from the front, briefly comprises of: Two Bedrooms, Fitted Kitchen, Spacious Lounge, House Bathroom and Tiered Garden. Driveway Parking, Part Furnished to Suit

£700 PCM



HALESOWEN, YEWTOP, MELBOURNE ROAD

Within walking distance to Halesowen, is this three story town house. Well worth an inspection inside and set within a quiet cul-de-sac, comprising of: Three Bedrooms, Large Fitted Dining Kitchen, Very Large Lounge, Downstairs WC, House Bathroom with Shower, Double Glazing, Gas Central Heating, Off Road Parking for 2 Cars and Garage, Close to local Schools and College.

£695 PCM



HALESOWEN, SANDERSON PLACE

Located in Hayley Green, is this unfurnished first floor apartment, briefly comprising of: Spacious Living Room, Fitted Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Master with En-Suite, Bathroom and Parking Space. Viewing Highly Recommended.

£650 PCM



HALESOWEN, HOWLEY GRANGE ROAD

A superb semi detached home, in the ever so popular area of Howley Grange, having undergone a refurbishment and being close to well sought after schools, comprising of: Three Bedrooms, Large Lounge, Separate Dining Room, Fitted Kitchen, House Bathroom with Shower, Off Taps, Double Glazing, Gas Central Heating, Driveway and Garage Parking, Unfurnished

£650 PCM



HALESOWEN, SUMMERFIELDS AVENUE

Ideally located in Hurst Green, close to popular school, motorway access and commutable to Birmingham, is this lovely semi-detached home, briefly comprising of: Three Large Bedrooms, Two Spacious Reception Rooms, Modern Fitted Kitchen, Family Bathroom with Shower, Front and Rear Gardens, Driveway Parking and Garage

£650 PCM



HALESOWEN, MANSELL CLOSE

A beautifully presented semi detached family home briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Fitted Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Spacious Living Room, Modern Dining Kitchen, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, House Bathroom with Shower, Gardens and 2 Allocated Parking Spaces.

£600 PCM



BRIERLEY HILL, MADISON AVENUE

An unfurnished modern townhouse situated in Merry Hill, briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Fitted Kitchen, Downstairs WC, Dining Room/Study, Living Room, House Bathroom, Three Bedrooms, Master Bedroom with En-Suite Shower Room, Allocated Parking Space

£595 PCM



OLDBURY, WOODFIELD AVENUE

Been tastefully refurbished and beautifully presented is this semi detached house, briefly comprising of: Two Reception Rooms, Fitted Kitchen, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom with Shower, Driveway Parking, Rear Garden, Double Glazing, Gas Central Heating, Unfurnished

£595 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, HALESOWEN ROAD

An unfurnished mid terraced house modernised throughout briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Two Reception Rooms, Fitted Kitchen, Utility Room, Downstairs WC, Three Good Sized Bedrooms, Bathroom with Shower, Courtyard Style Gardens, Parking to the Rear of the Property and On Road

£575 PCM



HALESOWEN, BETHESDA GARDENS

Located on this new build estate is this modern ground floor apartment, coming unfurnished, briefly comprising of: Two Bedrooms, Modern Bathroom with Shower, Master with En-Suite, Fitted Kitchen with White Goods, Open Plan Spacious Lounge, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Allocated Parking, A Must View Property

£550 PCM



HALESOWEN, HARDEN MANOR COURT

This light and airy first floor apartment, situated a stones throw away from Halesowen town centre, briefly comprising of: Two Double Bedrooms, Large Spacious Lounge, Fitted Kitchen, Family Bathroom with Shower, Double Glazing, Warm Air Heating, Communal Gardens, Plenty of Parking, Unfurnished

£550 PCM



STOURBRIDGE, TURNEY ROAD

Located in a quiet cul-de-sac is this unfurnished semi detached house, comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Large Living Room, Modern Fitted Kitchen, Two Double Bedrooms, One Single Bedroom, Modern Bathroom with Shower, Large Rear Garden, Ample Driveway Parking, Close to all local amenities

£500 PCM



ROWLEY REGIS, HIGHFIELD ROAD

This spacious and unfurnished terraced home has: Two Reception Rooms, Three Double Bedrooms, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Fitted Kitchen, Downstairs Bathroom with Shower, Rear Garden, On Road Parking

£495 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, KING STREET

Located in the heart of Old Hill, is this unfurnished first floor modern apartment, briefly comprising of: Two Bedrooms, Master Bedroom with En-Suite, Fitted Kitchen, Lounge, Double Glazing, Electric Storage Heating, Bathroom with Shower, Allocated Parking Space

£475 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, VICTORIA ROAD

An unfurnished semi detached house briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Kitchen, Living Room, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom, Front & Rear Gardens, Driveway Parking

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CRADLEY HEATH, UNITY DRIVE

Come on the market in this popular located apartment, close to Old Hill and local train station, is this unfurnished second floor apartment, briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Living Room, Fitted Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom with Shower, Allocated Parking Space

£450 PCM



HALESOWEN, WHITEHALL COURT

An unfurnished ground floor apartment in a sought after location, comprising of: One Double Bedroom, Large Living Room, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Fitted Kitchen, Bathroom with Shower, Communal Gardens and Carport to the Rear.

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DUDLEY, BEAN ROAD

A refurbished ground floor flat within easy reach of the town centre, briefly comprising of: Double Reception Hall with Minton Floor, Lounge, Double Bedroom, Fitted Kitchen, Shower Room, Double Glazing, and Communal Parking, Unfurnished

£380 PCM



HALESOWEN, APPERLEY WAY

An Unfurnished ground floor flat on a popular development, briefly comprising of: Double Bedroom, Fitted Kitchen (OWN COOKER TO BE SUPPLIED), Bathroom with Shower, Lounge, Electric Storage Heating, Parking, Communal garden

£375 PCM



HALESOWEN, PIPPIN AVENUE

Located on the popular Homer Hill Estate in Halesowen is this unfurnished first floor flat briefly comprising of: Living Room/Fitted Kitchen, Double Bedroom, Bathroom with Shower, Communal Gardens

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Suzuki holds finance deals until end of year



Suzuki's VAT-free autumn finance offers are available on the Swift and Alto ranges

As part of its autumn campaign, Suzuki GB has extended its 'VAT Parked' offer to the entire Alto and Swift ranges until the end of December.

This means that a new Alto is available from £6,665 and a Swift three-door from £8,880, saving £1,330 on an Alto; £1,780 on a Swift three-door and £2,165 on the top specification Swift SZ4 five-door.

Alto is equipped with four airbags, electric front windows and remote central locking.

All Alto models have a combined fuel consumption of 64.2mpg and emissions of 103g/km meaning they qualify for an Annual VED charge of just £20. The 1.3-litre Swift SZ3 DDiS, available at £11,125, recently achieved more than 86mpg in the annual Fleet World MPG Marathon, a competition staged across 380 miles, replicating all aspects of daily driving. This figure represented a 28 per cent improvement on the official combined figure of 67.3mpg and proved the economy potential of this model. For customers who need finance to pay for their new car with a low deposit and low monthly repayments, low rate plans are available on Alto and Swift and

are included in the VAT free offer. Taking Alto at £6,665 as an example, a deposit of £465 is all that is required to drive away followed by 36 monthly payments of £149 and an optional payment of £2,382 to keep the car at the end of the term.

A Swift three-door, available from £8,880 under the VAT-free scheme is available with a deposit of £1,575 followed by 36 monthly payments of £159 and a final payment of £3,437.

Purchase

The latest 2011 model Splash is available on zero per cent hire purchase and requires a low deposit of 25 per cent or £2,367 for the 1.0-litre SZ3 model. Payments are over three years at £198 per month. For £10 per month more, a Splash SZ3 with a recently revised and more powerful 1.2-litre engine is available with emissions of 119g/km and £30 in annual VED charges. Suzuki's highly competitive 0% APR three year hire purchase finance offers, available on SX4 and Grand Vitara models with 50 per cent deposit and payable over three years, will also continue until the end of December 2011. For more information on the Suzuki product range visit www.suzuki.co.uk.

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* Finance subject to status. Written quotations available on request. Over 18s only. A guarantee may be required. Prices and offers correct at time of going to press, subject to stock availability, terms and conditions. All prices and specifications are correct at time of going to press. Image is for illustration purpose only. Offer ends 31st October 2011. 50% deposit required

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Triumph back with new look

IT SEEMS rather over the top to describe Triumph's new Speed Triple as a legend when it only appeared in showrooms this year.

But while Triumph twins remain icons of a previous generation, the three-cylinder engines launched in 1994 propelled the new generation of bikes into the 21st century and quickly established a following of their own.

In that same year, Triumph conceived what was to become known as the "streetfighter" class: Sports machines without the conventional fairing and windshield.

Pundits rated the previous Speed Triple as among the best in its class. The new machine is even better, with a radical new look, new instruments, a little more power and a lot better handling.

The 1,050cc beast has 133bhp (up from 129bhp) and an all-new tubular alloy frame. That enabled the engineers to move the engine's position slightly forward, improving balance and making for sharper steering and more agile handling.

Exhausts

Redesigned exhausts help boost power, and while not noisy you're always aware of the pleasing growl on acceleration and the "pop pop" from the cans as you close the throttle to set up for a corner. The new bike has a flatter torque curve, too, for smooth, flowing performance throughout the rev range, from first to sixth gear.

The Triumph made easy work of the twisting byways of the Shropshire border as well as safely making its way through slower traffic on busy A roads, the instant response to a touch of throttle making for quick, safe overtaking.

The seat is now a little thinner and a touch lower, making the Speed Triple more comfortably accessible for short-legged riders such as me.

At the front, the round twin headlights have been replaced by a more modern, faceted design and there's a new, easier to read digital instrument display.

The new bike is short wheelbase, which aids agility, with an edgier, futuristic design which is certainly eye-catching, particularly in the white livery of the test bike.

The mass is so well-concentrated in the centre of the machine that a short plastic "fish tail" protrudes from under the rear seats to hold the rear lights beyond the back wheel.

The use of race-derived Metzeler K3 tyres seems to cope particularly well with putting the Speed Triple's power and torque down safely and securely.

At £8,799 (plus £600 if you choose the ABS version) the Speed Triple is reasonably priced for a large capacity machine with sports bike performance.



The Speed Triple from Triumph has seen some changes with a radical new look, more power and better handling. Priced £8,799 (plus £600 for the ABS version)

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broke, passport and
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WELSH PO
2 years old, micro chipped and
passport, quiet in traffic,
brilliant riding pony for chil-
dren, ridden by 9 year old, cash
included. Also
also stabling and grazing if needed
at cheap rate, Penn area.
£300, o.n.o.
01902 404569.

WANTED MODERN Touring
caravan, or static, must be in
good condition. 01384 274518 /
07703 540507.

caravans wanted

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considered. Please call with
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Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a puppy farmer:

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with its Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree.

Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

ADORABLE TOP quality pedigree Airedale Terrier puppies, black & white, 11 weeks old, standing, ready December 5, 2011. Three dogs, £300, 07738 207059, 01290 253927.

BABY French Giant Red Rabbits, boys and girls available, £15 each. Also Lion Head crosses, 5yrs, ready now. 01902 497477.

BABY Rabbit Black and white Dutch male, 11 weeks old. Free to good home only. 07903 070000 (07903 070000).

BLACK LABRADOR PUPS excellent pedigree, KC reg, vaccinated, 8 weeks old. Ready now. £250. 01743 894348.

CAVAPOO PUPPIES all colours and Cavalier King Charles puppies/juniors. 07867 580504.

CHIHUAHUA CROSS JACK Russell puppies, 8 weeks old, ready now. £200 each. 07737 37084.

CHIHUAHUA, Two tiny females, long hair. Very cute, 5/75 each. Telephone 01580 77100.

COCKER SPANIEL puppy, black, KC registered, inoculated. 07654 471388.

FIRESTOCK DOG RESCUE Rehoming - Bren JRT, 7yrs, female. Lucy - JRT, 18mths, female. Patch - JRT, 2yrs, male. Lexi - Staffie, 18mths, female. Winnie - Staffie, 18mths, female. Justin - Whippet, 4yrs, male. Amber - Staffie, 6yrs, female. Nesta - young Westie, female. Gem - 5yrs, female. Casper - GSD, Cody - Staffie, 5yrs, male.

01299 266313 or 07564 262371
w w w . f o r e s t s t o k . o r g . u k

HALF PERSIAN Kittens, boys, girls, various colours, 8 weeks, £70. 01746 399490.

JACK RUSSELL Puppies, 3 years, mainly white, £50. Telephone 07849 99511.

JACK RUSSELL Puppies, 14 wks, male, black-tan, fully inoculated / wormed. 07784 362091.

KING CHARLES CAVALIER boy, 12 weeks old, good home only. £275. 07789 387177.

KITTENS, 8 weeks old, two grey, 600 each. Three tortoiseshell, £20 each. Litter trained. 07765 103474.

KITTENS Black and white female, very cute and fluffy, litter trained etc. Ready now £20. 01902 651787.

KITTENS, Two rare ginger females, £40 each, 1 black/white female, £25. 13 black/white, fully trained. 01902 67110.

KITTENS Various colours, male and female, weaned and litter trained. £50. 07855 651158.

KITTENS x3, eight weeks old, 600 each. Dead 2, 600 each. £20 each to ensure good homes. 07780 881623.

MINIATURE CHIHUAHUA cross Yorkshire Terrier puppies, boys, girls, 7 weeks, £250. 07940 134394.

MINIATURE DACHSHUND cross Shetland puppy, 10 weeks, £150, adorable, £450. 07867 330504.

MINIATURE SMOOTHHAIR Dachshund Puppies, good pedigree. £550. 01384 341878.

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POODLES, miniature, toy, black and brown puppies. Breeder for training. 01746 789288.

PORTUGUESE PODENGO bitch, 14 weeks, tan/white, chipped, vaccinated, KC reg, and insured. £800. 01034 362815.

PURE WHITE baby albino cockatiel, hand tame, comes with new cage on castors and all toys. Trying to talk, £100. 0780604419.

SHIH TZU 1 female 2yr old white female, 1 10 week old female all brown, excellent pedigree, £500. 01902 828271 / 07789 28272.

SHIH TZU Puppy, girl, KC reg, pedigree, 8 weeks old, paper trained, excellent pedigree. £500. 01902 828271 / 07789 28272.

STAFFIE pups, only 4 left, 3 black and white, 1 blue, both parents can be seen. £200. 07737 14481.

STAFFORDSHIRE Bull Terrier puppies, black, beautiful, good pedigree. Gentle natured callers only. £400. 07840 509370 / 01384 344449.



SUKI

Beautiful, 3 year old rescue Staffie, desperate for loving home. No other pets. No young children. 01922 627013.

More Rescue Dogs at ROSIEDEN, also Dog Walkers needed.

TERRAPIN NAMED Marley, male, 2 years old, comes with 2ft air tank with lighter heater and filter. £50. 0791 334801.

TROPICAL FISH tank with complete set up, filter, heater, pump, etc. 2 loach fish and some Guppies. £40. 0791 334301.

TWO MALE KITTENS, 9 weeks old, 07402 963067 or 0121 530 1976.

TWO SHIH TZU puppies, girls, £500. 01902 445735 or 07864 334655.

WANTED Whippet Pup, 01902 354877.

WEST HIGHLAND White Terrier puppies, Both Parents can be seen, full pedigree. £250 each. 07879 291307.

YORKSHIRE Terrier, bitch, pedigree, 8 weeks old, £275. 07864 334655.

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FIAT PUNTO 04 reg, 39,000 miles, blue, 1.2, 5dr, 12 months MoT, 6 months tax, £1,600. 01034 379155.

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It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

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PLEASANT FURNISHED room in Dudley DG / CH From £45 per week 07813 112223

BILBROOK SWINDON Apartments to let from £450pcm. No DSS. Call 07870 341089.

BILSTON 2-bed flat, £420pcm. DSS welcome, no pets. 01902 404038 / 07738 875035

BRIERLEY HILL / Pennsnett / Dudley 12 bed flats, Rent/Dep next. 0121 550 0064 / 07970 800655.

CHAPEL ASH Wolverhampton, 2 Bed GF Flat, DG, New Carpets, DSS couple/parent welcome. 07773 226589

DSS FLATS Wolverhampton, Studios & 1 Beds in Merridale & Pennfields, 35+ only, low deposits. 07773 256589

DUDLEY BEDSITS to let from £50-£65 pw inc bills, secure, D.S.S ok, flex terms. 07798 568844

DUDLEY FURNISHED room in shared house, CH, DG, No DSS, pets. £60pw 07712 950940.

DUDLEY Refurbished 3-bed house near Town Centre, DG, CH, £255pcm. 07930 387190.

FLAT TO LET W-ton, Central heated, DSS welcome, off road parking. 07818 896058.

FLATS TO LET Bilston, inc bills, parking, 1st floor, deposit. 07944 625591 or 0121 5266677.

MODERN 2-BED Flat, Penn Fields, fully furn. £110 pw. 0121 308 0025 / 07811 182419

MODERN ONE BED FLAT in Brierley Hill, CH, DG, parking. All bills included. No DSS, £120 per week. 07791 749334.

NEW PARK VILLAGE, Wolverhampton, 4 bed terrace, DG, CH, New Carpets & Decor. DSS family welcome. 07773 256589

OLDBURY / Blackheath, brand new 12 bed flats, Rent/Dep next. 0121 550 0064 / 07970 988055.

ONE BEDROOM secluded wooden chalet with lounge, bathroom, kitchen. Near Hagley. Stable if required 01562 701201

ROOMS & BEDSITS in Brierley Hill and Fourtybriars from £60 p/w onwards Tel: 07540 370381.

TIPSTON 3 bed flats to let, DSS considered, newly decorated. 07961 301577 or 07906 878175.

TWO MODERN 2 bed mid Terrace houses, Brierley Hill and Wollescote full CH, off road parking. £475pcm. 07748 941611.

WEDNESFIELD FLAT TO LET, DSS considered, Ring H.S.M.S 07986 012154 / 01902 738709.

WHITMORE REANS, Wolverhampton, 2 & 3 & 4 Bed houses, large selection available, DSS welcome. 07773 256589

WILLENHALL Hawkeswell Drive. Modern detached house. 2 bedrooms. Gas heating. Gardens. Carport & parking. £495 pcm. Thomas Skidmore 01902 421491

WILLENHALL Lowry Close, Terrace house. 2 bedrooms. Gas heating. Gardens. £395 pcm. Thomas Skidmore 01902 421491

WILLENHALL, Portobello, 3 bed house near Stowheath schools, CH, DG, DSS welcome. 07773 256589

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My husband & I were struggling with money. I had been laid off and we didn't want to leave our home. We found this company and they offered us a loan to help us through. We were able to keep our home and we are now back to work. We are so grateful to this company. We would recommend them to anyone in a similar situation.

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MOBILE HOME FOR SALE in Coven, 2-bed, single unit. Residents must be over 50, £35,500. 01092 781250

TINGED PARK HOME near Albrighton, 40ft x 20ft, with ensuite, two double bedrooms, on quiet residential park. Country surroundings, bus route. £115,000. 01902 374758.

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WILLERBY LYNDRUST LUXURY MOBILE HOME Sited in Alhaurin de la Torre, 15 mins from Malaga airport, 15 mins from Torremolinos, 2 mins from Legua Golf Club. All extras including A/C, Sky TV etc. For more details and information visit the site. £31,000 ono. 07753 551163.

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houses for sale

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Detached residence with spectacular views, 3 double bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, shower en suite to master bedroom, large dining kitchen, sitting room, large balcony with view over open country, CH, DG, garage, 1 & 2 drive, landscaped gardens. Offers are invited for quick sale

Price guide £225,000. 07546 848948 / 01686 610073.

WILLENHALL 3 adjoining terrace houses - 2 vacant (3 beds), 1 tenanted (2 bed), new AST agreed at £400pcm. For sale as a whole £225,000. K Stuart Swash, 01902 710626.

DUNSTALL PARK

4 bed Semi. GCH, DG, high standard.

See online listings. £159,950 ono. Telephone 07753 932172.

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sport

DK at Twickenham to launch awards



Launching the Awards from left England World Cup 2003 winner Joe Worsley, Ken Crane from DK RFU, President Willie Wildash from DK, David Coyle and women's rugby star Maggie Alphonsi

Staff from Dudley Kingswinford were special guests at Twickenham when they helped launch the RFU President's XV Awards.

The awards are handed out to clubs which have promoted the development of grassroots rugby and DK won the communications and technology award for 2011.

As well as attending the launch, DK club members Ken Crane and David Coyle met England rugby stars Joe Worsley and Maggie Alphonsi and RFU president Willie Wildash. Other 2011 winners were also invited to

Twickenham and Mr Crane said it was a fantastic experience.

"We have had the opportunity to meet other President's XV winners and discuss how to overcome different challenges within a grassroots rugby club," he added.

DK's award, which they received in March, came in recognition of creating DK TV which shows match highlights on the club's website.

Willie Wildash, RFU President said: "It's a real honour to launch this year's awards which reward the hard work and innovation which helps grows and sustain our game."

Victory takes Old Hales to top of the league

Finchfield 1 OHHC 1st XI 4

Old Halesonians 1st XI Hockey Team stroled to a 4-1 victory over Finchfield, with four different scorers. The win puts Hales joint league leaders in the MRHA ENER-G West Midlands Premier Division.

Both teams started the game patiently, but it was Hales who opened the scoring. Following a progressive build up, the ball was driven down the right by Ben Hughes, who fired the ball across the D to striker Tom Bulteel who flicked the ball into the net for a 1-0 lead. Old Hales never looked back and soon doubled their lead when another well-worked move down the right flank led to a goal.

The ball was passed inside to Paul Harrold, who found Harry Hughes in the D. Hughes easily put the ball into the goal to double the visitors lead. At 2-0, Hales continued their assault on the Finchfield defence. Marc Herickx had his shot saved by the Finchfield keeper, but Josh Rand-hawa was on hand to put the ball into the net.

In the second half, Hales continued where they left off with pressure on the home side's goal. However, it was only a matter of time before the visitors grabbed their fourth

goal of the game. The goal was surrounding by some controversy following a Hales penalty corner.

The ball appeared to deflect off the body of Paul Woodall and into the back of the goal, but the umpire saw no infringement and allowed it. With a 4-0 lead, Old Halesonians kept their composure and were allowed long periods of possession. Finchfield gained a consolation goal when a momentary lack of concentration from captain Doug Houghton saw him yellow carded.

The resulting penalty corner was saved by GK James Jones, but the Finchfield striker reacted first to the loose ball and flicked it past a helpless defence. Despite the best efforts of man of the match Mark Curzon, the ball found its way over the goal line.

Hales will hope to continue their good form as they host Sikh Union (COVENTRY) on Saturday at Great Park, Rubery.

OHHC 2nd XI 1 Worcester 3

It was a tale of penalty corners as Old Hales 2nd XI lost 3-1 to top of the table Worcester.

Hales started brightly and dominated the first 10

minutes with slick passing and movement, but they could not take advantage of the numerous penalty corners they won early on. Worcester grew into the game and won a penalty corner which was converted despite keeper Steve Charlton getting a stick to the ball. This knocked some confidence out of the Hales side and they struggled for the rest of the half to keep possession, as Worcester scored from a further penalty corner before the break.

Hales were second best for most of the second half. Nick Trulove went close with a one-on-one, but Worcester grabbed another goal from a penalty corner. Hales rallied back and got a consolation goal as Mark Rigby struck home from a penalty corner on the final whistle.

Stratford 3 OHHC 3rd XI 1

Old Halesonians 3rd XI were unlucky in defeat against an experienced Stratford side. Hales started well when James Bailey found the net after slipping the ball under the Stratford keeper. Unfortunately, that was as good as it got for the relatively inexperienced Hales side who struggled through the rest of the game. Stratford were able to draw level and extend their lead into the 2nd half. Hales

were disappointed with their 3-1 loss.

OHHC 4th XI 6 Old Wulfrunians 0

Old Halesonians 4th XI easily defeated a visiting Old Wulfrunians side. Hales striker, Mellor opened the scoring, and a second soon followed from Harrold. Mellor doubled his tally before half time. Gurmin made it 4-0 for the home side, before Jones grabbed a fifth. Harrold then grabbed his brace before the final whistle in a convincing 6-0 victory.

Sutton 5 OHHC 5th XI 2

Old Halesonians Ladies held out for a 2-1 win over visitors Harborne. In a close game. Hales were able to ensure the three points to keep the team comfortably mid-table.

OHHC Ladies 2 Harborne 1

Old Halesonians Ladies held out for a 2-1 win over visitors Harborne. In a close game. Hales were able to ensure the three points to keep the team comfortably mid-table.

OHHC Badgers 4 Winesbury 1

Old Halesonians Badgers comfortably won 4-1 over local rivals Winesbury in a highly contested fixture.

YELTZ MISERY HAS COME TO THE FOUR

TAUNTON TOWN 3 HALESOWEN TOWN 1

Halesowen's difficult run of form extended to four defeats in five outings with defensive lapses proving costly at the start of each half.

Prior to kick-off a sombre one minute silence was observed following the nearby fatal motorway pile-up the previous evening.

Mark Smith and Michael McGrath were left on the bench in favour of Brendan Kelly and Nathan Jackson, in Halesowen's first visit to Wordsworth Road – now dealing with the aftermath of a devastating clubhouse fire – since 2004.

As the game got underway the changes couldn't prevent the hosts forcing two early corners through efforts from Rodney Marsh and Darren Rice.

Taunton's youngsters then took an early lead after usually reliable goalkeeper Paul Evans dropped Luke Cole's sixth-minute corner, allowing Chris McGrath to slam home into the roof of the net.

Halesowen's first opportunity came four minutes later when Lee Chilton struck Kelly's deep cross wide and Jackson's shot was saved by Chris Astley a minute later.

The Yeltz improved before the interval and Chilton's fierce drive was beaten away for a corner by Astley after half an hour.

Tremendous

Within minutes, Jackson volleyed over the bar and Astley collected Justin Nisbett's low drive, before Cole made a tremendous interception to prevent Chilton latching onto Naveed Arshad's superb defence splitting pass.

Halesowen also made a poor start to the second period and fell two goals behind to the Peacocks when Jon Vance beat Scott Mason to a through ball and slotted past Evans.

After Michael McGrath replaced Jackson for Halesowen, Folkes spun a good chance by ballooning over the bar.

Arshad pulled a goal back for the Yeltz by curling a delightful direct free-kick past the badly positioned defensive wall into the top corner, much to the ire of furious goalkeeper Astley who was left standing.

But Arshad blotted his copybook by being dismissed with a straight red card just seven minutes later after Phil Veal went down in an off-the-ball incident.

With five minutes to go the ten men fell further behind minute when a long clearance from goalkeeper Astley found Ross MacNab free to tuck a third home goal beyond Evans and inflict Halesowen's worst defeat of the season.

David Johnson

No goals are a no go for Tividale's ambitions

TIVIDALE 0 HEATHER ST JOHNS 0

Tividale missed out on the opportunity to make up ground on the leading Midland Alliance teams when they were held to a goalless draw in an intriguing match.

The hosts began brightly and dominated the opening exchanges without being able to create any significant openings.

In fact, it was central defender Mark Thorton who had their best effort when his enterprising run saw him shoot just over the bar from 25 yards in the ninth minute.

Two minutes later the visitors managed their first attempt on goal when Troy Wallen's 20-yard effort produced an identical result. In the 13th minute Tividale skipper Andy Parsons forced a good save

from Saints goalkeeper Jamie Brassington. Although Tividale continued to press forward and enjoy the lion's share of the possession, they were restricted to long-range efforts from Sam Williams and Parsons and a close-range header from an acute angle by Kyle Hill.

Lively

The visitors opened the second half with a lot more intent and it took a good last-gasp tackle from Parsons to prevent the lively Wallen closing in on the Tividale goal. For a period of time it was the visitors who were enjoying the majority of attempts on goal without really threatening. Parsons went close to breaking the

deadlock but his powerful header from 12 yards went just over.

A sustained spell of constant pressure from Tividale saw substitute Matt Jukes hit the post from close range in the 68th minute.

As the pressure mounted in a final flurry, another Tividale substitute, Matt Salmon, put the ball the wrong side of the post when he met a low cross in the 78th minute.

Tividale manager Dean Whitehouse admitted he was disappointed not to have taken all three points but said: "We needed something special to unlock their defence. "We worked hard enough but St Johns deserved their draw."

Sweet success for the Hawks home and away

GIRLS LEAGUE

Halas Hawks 4 Ferndale Colts 0

A very assured performance by the U16 girls saw them take all three points against Ferndale. Lauren Taylor netted from a corner followed by a brace from Kate Drew and a terrific 30-yard strike from Liz McAleenan.

BOYS LEAGUE

Halas Hawks West 2 Sedgley White Lions 0

In the second half Jayke Adams netted from a narrow angle. Anthony Andreou put Halas through to the next round. The entire team was awarded the man of the match.

Sedgley White Lions 0 Halas Hawks East 3

The U10s progressed in the cup with a 3-0 victory. Halas took the lead with an Oliver Miller strike. A nice left foot finish from Charlie Greening who also forced a third goal after a corner was put in their own net by Sedgley.

Kingsley Olympic 0 Halas Hawks 6

The U12s had a comfortable win over Kingsley Olympic with goals from Mohamed Yafai (2), Adam Bowen (2), Jonty Round and Matthew Evans. Man of the match went to Mohammed Mohamed

Halas Hawks 3 Trysull Tigers West 2

The Hawks' U13s started well with an early goal through Nathan Postin. Trysull drew level but Halas regained the lead through Callum Hudson. The second half saw Halas extend their lead through Josh Bernard. Trysull pulled one back but Halas held on.

Thimblemill Vipers 3 Halas Hawks 4

The U14s took the lead three times against Thimblemill Vipers only to see their opponents draw level on each occasion. Liam Holmes got two and Michael Eaton scored a penalty and the vital match-winning goal.

Wombourne 1 Halas Hawks 3

The U15s Hawks burst into gear early in the second half through Josh March. Dan Willetts then added two more goals.

Halas Hawks 9 Oldswinford 0

A lively start to this U17s game saw the Halas lads take an early lead and then slowly worked up through the gears to go into half time break at 4-0 up.

HALAS HAWKS LADIES

Santiago Belles 0 Halas Ladies 4

The Hawks scored one goal in the first half through Gemma Colledge.

The second half saw two further goals from Colledge and one from Tash Berry.

Hasbury has six appeal

Stourbridge Girls League U14

Busteholme 1 Hasbury 6

The first real attack at goal saw Busteholme score, with a good move down the left, their striker shot past Shannon Worsey for 1-0.

Midway into the half Hasbury's Ellis Hall struck the ball sweetly for a 1-1 scoreline at half time.

The second half saw Ellis Hall score her second to put Hasbury 2-1 up. Hasbury pinned Busteholme back with some great wing play from Levi Cheadle and Sian Berry and Siobhan Peplow's powerful runs through the middle, and from one corner Ellis Hall swung the ball right into a crowded box which some how went in for 3-1 and Ellis Hall's hat-trick.

Sian Berry put the ball into her own net. Sian Berry scored her second goal and Hasbury's fifth.

The best move of the game saw Becky Hurley's pass find Levi to cross into the box for Meg to collect turn and smash the ball against the side of the post for it to fall to Sian to crack home her third and Hasbury's sixth.

Challenge not strong enough to beat Malvern

Malvern 45 Old Halesonians 13

Old Halesonians made a strong challenge in their 45-13 away loss to Malvern in their North Midlands Cup quarter final, a scoreline which somewhat belied the visiting side's efforts.

It was a bright start for the visitors in the opening exchanges as they put the home side under periods of pressure which resulted in a penalty taking OH into a 3-0 lead, although this pressure could not quite convert into further points.

In Malvern's first foray into the visitor's territory scrum half Tom Longley made a break from his own half with the ball eventually finding Ollie Marshall who went over for the try. The conversion by Simon Daves making it 7-3 to Malvern.

Malvern doubled their tally from a scrum on OH's five metre line was eventually fed to winger James Bennett who cut inside to dot down near to the posts for old man Daves to again convert for 14-3. The remainder of the first half was finely balanced with the visitors vying for forward domination and the home side willing to run from all areas. The attacking play paid off when Longley went over after a fine passage of play.

Tempers

Although the half time score was 21-3 to Malvern this did not deter Old Hales who were well and truly still in the game at this point.

The second half started with tempers fraying and handbags being thrown but this should not take away from a thoroughly entertaining game. An unfortunate lapse in concentration from the visitors led to a soft try from Malvern which took them 26-3 ahead and left a mountain to climb for OH.

Hales made a quick riposte when a good platform from the pack led to a flowing backs' move with veteran winger Sebastian Richards passing back inside for full back Hooper to outstrip the defence and score an unconverted try.

The game was now an open affair and the home side took advantage of Hales having to chase the game and running in three tries in quick succession including an interception from their own half.

With the final move of the match sharp hands from Hooper released Seb Richards who chipped his opposite number and with the covering full back unable to gather Richards went over for a consolation try, making the final score 45-13. Although Malvern were without doubt the deserving winners you couldn't help but feel the score line did not fully reflect the nature of the game.

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